

# TIMELY ARTICLES

ON

## SLAVERY.

BY

SAMUEL HOPKINS, D. D.

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"The whole of our war with Britain was a contest for LIBERTY, and we declared in words and actions that we chose rather to die than to be slaves and have our liberty and property taken from us. We viewed the British in an odious and contemptible light, purely because they were attempting to deprive us, by violence, in some measure, of those our inalienable rights; but if, at the SAME TIME, or since, we have taken or withheld these same rights from the Africans or any of our fellow-men, we have justified the inhabitants of Britain in all they have done against us, and declared that all the blood which has been shed in consequence of our opposition to them is chargeable on us."—*Hopkins's Works*, Vol. II., 617.

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## PREFACE.

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THE history of the following articles on Slavery, as briefly stated in the Advertisement, is exceedingly interesting. It transmits to us the views and feelings of some of the most eminent statesmen of revolutionary times — men most prominent in the early history of our national compact. The publication of these articles at this time is well and appropriate. They should be carefully read by all our politicians who would know what were the views of those illustrious men of 1776. They should be read by all clergymen, and every intelligent citizen while the subject of slavery is exciting such deep interest through the land, that they may learn the views, and see the disinterested boldness and fidelity of a great and good man — a friend of the oppressed, and a fearless rebuker of popular sin — whose name will be revered and honored by the good in all future time.

Says his learned biographer: “Dr. Hopkins believed that if he lifted his voice in behalf of the bondmen, he should advance the interests of his race and the honor of his Maker. He offered himself as a sacrifice. He did it deliberately, solemnly. Anticipating the indignation of his people, and the anger of the community, he preached a sermon against the kidnapping, and purchasing, and

retaining of slaves. A New-England poet has said: 'It may well be doubted whether, on that Sabbath-day, the angels of God in their wide survey of His universe, looked upon a nobler spectacle than that of the minister of Newport rising up before his slaveholding congregation, and demanding, in the name of the Highest, the deliverance of the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound.' The citizens of Newport were startled by this novel discourse. No minister in the land had preached on slavery in so bold a manner. Hopkins stood up alone; not, indeed, without any in the State who would give him their sympathies, but without any who would rise in bold resistance to the dominant powers. He anticipated the worst, and showed the spirit of a martyr. His sermons offended a few and made them permanently his enemies; but the majority of his hearers were astonished that they, of themselves, had not long before seen and felt the truths which he disclosed to them.

"The following Dialogue is a remarkable document. It opposes both the purchasing and the owning of slaves. Very few reasons and motives have since been adduced for manumission which are not found in this pamphlet. He published it in the midst of the revolutionary war. He deemed it a fitting time for such an appeal; because while men were expending their treasures for their *own* freedom, they would feel the consistency of giving freedom to their *own* bondmen. Hopkins meant to sound a trumpet which would be heard throughout the land. He dedicated his pamphlet to the 'Honorable Continental Congress.' It was reprinted in an edition of two thousand copies, by the New York Manumission Society; and a copy of it was sent to every member of Congress and of the New York Legislature, (see Advertisement). Dr. Hopkins was admitted an honorary member of the above-named Society; and about the same time he was elected an honorary member of the Pennsylvania Society for the Manumission of Slaves, of which Society Benjamin Franklin was President, and Dr. Benjamin Rush was Secretary.

"It must not be supposed that Hopkins confined his efforts to the pulpit and the press. In one instance he borrowed, on his own responsibility, the sum requisite to secure the freedom of a slave in whom he became interested. He was a kind of anti-slavery apostle, visiting from house to house, and urging masters to free their bondmen. He persuaded several of his neighbors to perform this duty; and his conversation with many clergymen awakened their minds to exertion in this branch of benevolence. While on a visit at the house of Dr. Bellamy, who then owned a slave, he pressed upon his friend the objections against slavery. Bellamy defended the system with the usual arguments, and Hopkins refuted them, and then called on his friend to free his slave at once. Bellamy replied, that his slave was a most faithful and judicious servant; that in the management of his farm he could be trusted with everything; and that he was so happy in his servitude that he would, in the opinion of his master, refuse his freedom were it offered him. 'Will you consent to his liberation,' said Dr. Hopkins, 'if he really desires it?' 'Yes,' replies Dr. Bellamy, 'I will.' The slave was then at work in the field. 'Call him in,' said Dr. Hopkins. The slave came to receive as he supposed the commands of his master. 'Have you a good master?' said Dr. Hopkins, addressing the slave. What could the slave answer but — 'Yes?' 'Are you happy in your present condition?' How could the slave deny that he was? 'Would you be *more* happy if you were free?' 'O, yes, Massa,—me would be much more happy!' 'You have your desire,' exclaimed Dr. Bellamy; 'from this moment you are free!'"

The first Society in the world for the abolition of Slavery seems to have been formed in Philadelphia, by a few Quakers, in 1775. A new impulse was given to it in 1787, when Benjamin Franklin was chosen its President. The second was formed in New York, January, 1785. John Jay, then Secretary of State, was its first President, and Alexander Hamilton its second President. The third Society was formed in Rhode-Island, under the influence of Hopkins; the

first meeting for consultation was held in the large front parlor of his house. Judge David Howell, a member of the Old Congress, was its first President, and Gov. Arthur Fenner one of its standing Committee. The Connecticut Society was instituted in 1790. Dr. Stiles was President, and Judge Baldwin, Secretary. Dr. Hart was very active in its formation, and was appointed to preach the annual sermon before it in 1792. Virginia and New Jersey formed Abolition Societies in 1791. In the Memoir of Dr. Hopkins, recently published by the Congregational Board of Publication, is much that is deeply interesting on this subject; showing the lively interest then felt, not only by Dr. Hopkins, but by the most distinguished men in the country, on the subject of emancipating the slaves. The Memoir contains Hopkins's correspondence with the most distinguished men of this land, and of Europe — such as Zachary Macaulay, the Editor of the Christian Observer, the companion of Scott, Newton, Wilberforce, the father of the Historian Macaulay; with Dr. Erskine, of Edinburgh, the friend of President Edwards, and numerous others. For further particulars, relating to the deep interest then felt on the subject of emancipation and the distinguished men then prominent in this work, we refer to the above-mentioned Memoir of Hopkins, by Prof. E. A. Park. It will be seen that the distinguished men of revolutionary time, while striving for their own liberty were aware of the inconsistency of holding their fellow-men in bondage.

EDITOR.

A DIALOGUE  
CONCERNING THE  
SLAVERY OF THE AFRICANS,  
SHOWING IT TO BE THE  
DUTY AND INTEREST OF THE AMERICAN COLONIES TO  
EMANCIPATE ALL THE AFRICAN SLAVES.  
WITH AN  
ADDRESS TO THE OWNERS OF SUCH SLAVES.  
DEDICATED TO  
THE HONORABLE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS.

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“Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause  
of the poor and needy.” — PR. xxxi. 9.

“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also  
to them likewise.” — LUKE vi. 31

## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE first edition of the following Dialogue, written by Dr. Hopkins, was published in 1776. The second edition was published by the New York Manumission Society, established in New York, January, 1785, under the presidency of John Jay, then secretary of state for foreign affairs.

### EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF SAID SOCIETY.

“Dec. 11, 1785. *Resolved*, That the Standing Committee take order for printing two thousand copies of a pamphlet, entitled ‘A Dialogue concerning the Slavery of the Africans; showing it to be the Duty and Interest of the American Colonies to emancipate all the African Slaves: with an Address to the Owners of such Slaves. Dedicated to the Honorable Continental Congress, and published at Norwich, 1776.’

“Feb. 3, 1786. *Resolved*, That each of the members of Congress, and of the senate and assembly of this state, be furnished with one of the pamphlets, entitled, ‘A Dialogue on the Slavery of the Africans,’ etc.”

It may show something of the estimation in which Dr. Hopkins was held as a writer, and his influence as a man, as also the views of distinguished men of that day, to state further that the mayor of the city of New York, Hon. James Duane, Hon. Robert R. Livingston, then chancellor of the state of New York, and Hon. Alexander Hamilton, were active members of the society which adopted and published this Dialogue; and also that Alexander Hamilton, secretary of the treasury, was, in 1790, elected president of the society in the place of John Jay, who resigned on being appointed chief justice of the United States.

It is supposed to be owing to the influence of this Dialogue, that, in May, 1786, a petition was submitted and adopted by the society, praying the legislature of New York to prohibit the exportation of slaves. It commenced as follows: “Your memorialists, being deeply affected by the situation of those who, although *free by the laws of God*, are held in slavery by the laws of this state, view with pain and regret the additional miseries which these unhappy people experience from the practice of exporting them like cattle to the West Indies and the Southern States.” This petition was drafted and headed by the president, John Jay, and also signed by Robert R. Livingston, chancellor, and Alexander Hamilton, and the clergy of the city of New York.

TO

THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS,

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE THIRTEEN UNITED AMERICAN COLONIES.\*

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MUCH-HONORED GENTLEMEN:

As God, the great Father of the universe, has made you the fathers of these colonies,—and in answer to the prayers of his people given you counsel, and that wisdom and integrity in the exertion of which you have been such great and extensive blessings, and obtained the approbation and applause of your constituents and the respect and veneration of the nations in whose sight you have acted in the important, noble struggle for LIBERTY,—we naturally look to you in behalf of more than half a million of persons in these colonies, who are under such a degree of oppression and tyranny as to be wholly deprived of all civil and personal liberty, to which they have as good a right as any of their fellow-men, and are reduced to the most abject state of bondage and slavery without any just cause.

We have particular encouragement thus to apply to you, since you have had the honor and happiness of leading these colonies to resolve to stop the slave trade, and to buy no more slaves imported from Africa. We have the satisfaction of the best assurances that you have done this not merely from political reasons, but from a conviction of the unrighteousness and cruelty of that trade, and a regard to justice and benevolence,—deeply sensible of the inconsistency of promoting the slavery of the Africans, at the same time we are asserting our own civil liberty at the risk of our fortunes and lives. This leaves in our minds no doubt of your being sensible of the equal unrighteousness and oppression, as well as inconsistency with ourselves, in holding so many hundreds of thousands of blacks in slavery, who have an equal right to freedom with ourselves, while we are maintaining this struggle for our own and our children's liberty; and a hope and confidence that the cries and tears of these oppressed will be regarded by you, and that your wisdom and

\* The reader is desired to observe that the first edition of this Dialogue was published early in the year 1776, before the declaration of our independence.



the great influence you have in these colonies will be so properly and effectually exerted as to bring about a total abolition of slavery, in such a manner as shall greatly promote the happiness of those oppressed strangers and the best interest of the public.

There are many difficulties and obstacles, we are sensible, in the way of this good work; but when the propriety, importance, and necessity of it come into view, we think ourselves warranted to address you in the words spoken to Ezra on an occasion not wholly dissimilar: "Arise, for this matter belongeth unto you; we also will be with you: be of good courage and do it."

The righteous and merciful Governor of the world has given the greatest encouragement to go on, and thoroughly execute judgment, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, both in his word, and in the wonderful things he has done for us since we have begun to reform this public iniquity. But, if we stop here, what will be the consequence?

It is observable that when the Swiss were engaged in their struggle for liberty, in which they so remarkably succeeded, they entered into the following public resolve: "No Swiss shall take away any thing by violence from another, neither in time of war nor peace." How reasonable and important is it that we should at this time heartily enter into, and thoroughly execute, such a resolution! And that this implies the emancipation of all our African slaves, surely none can doubt.

In this view the following Dialogue is humbly offered to your perusal, hoping that it may have your approbation and patronage.

May you judge the poor of the people, save the children of the needy, relieve the oppressed, and deliver the spoiled out of the hands of the oppressor, and be the happy instruments of procuring and establishing universal liberty to white and black, to be transmitted down to the latest posterity.

With high esteem, and the most friendly sentiments,

We are, honorable gentlemen,

Your very humble servants,

THE EDITORS.

# SLAVERY OF THE AFRICANS.

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## A DIALOGUE.

A. SIR, what do you think of the motion made by some among us to free all our African slaves? They say that our holding these blacks in slavery as we do is an open violation of the law of God, and is so great an instance of unrighteousness and cruelty that we cannot expect deliverance from present calamities, and success in our struggle for liberty in the American colonies, until we repent, and make all the restitution in our power. For my part, I think they carry things much too far on this head; and if any thing might be done for the freedom of our slaves, this is not a proper time to attend to it while we are in such a state of war and distress, and affairs of much greater importance demand all our attention, and the utmost exertion of the public.

B. Sir, I am glad you have introduced this subject, especially as you own a number of these slaves. I shall attend to it with pleasure, and offer my sentiments upon it freely, expecting you will as freely propose the objections you shall have against any thing I shall advance. And I take leave here to observe, that, if the slavery in which we hold the blacks is wrong, it is a very great and public sin, and, therefore, a sin which God is now testifying against in the calamities he has brought upon us; consequently, must be reformed before we can reasonably expect deliverance, or even sincerely ask for it. It would be worse than madness, then, to put off attention to this matter, under the notion of attending to more important affairs. This is acting like the mariner, who, when his ship is filling with water, neglects to stop the leak, or ply the pump, that he may mend his sails. There are, at the lowest computation, 800,000 slaves in British America, including the West India islands, and a greater part of these

are in the colonies on the continent; and if this is, in every instance, wrong, unrighteousness, and oppression, it must be a very great and crying sin, there being nothing of the kind equal to it on the face of the earth. There are but few of these slaves, indeed, in New England, compared with the vast numbers in the islands and the southern colonies; and they are treated much better on the continent, and especially among us, than they are in the West Indies. But, if it be all wrong, and real oppression of the poor, helpless blacks, we, by refusing to break this yoke and let these injured captives go free, do practically justify and support this slavery in general, and make ourselves, in a measure at least, answerable for the whole; and we have no way to exculpate ourselves from the guilt of the whole, and bear proper testimony against this great evil, but by freeing all our slaves. Surely, then, this matter admits of no delay, but demands our first and most serious attention and speedy reformation.

A. I acknowledge the slave trade, as it has been carried on with the Africans, cannot be justified; but I am not yet convinced that it is wrong to keep those in perpetual bondage who by this trade have been transported from Africa to us, and are become our slaves. If I viewed this in the light you do, I should agree with you that it is of the highest importance that they should all be made free without delay; as we could not expect the favor of Heaven, or with any consistency ask it, so long as they are held in bondage.

B. I am glad you have attended to the affair so much as to be convinced of the unrighteousness of the slave trade. Indeed, this conviction has been so spread of late that it has reached almost all men on the continent, except some of those who are too deeply interested in it to admit the light which condemns it; and it has now but few advocates, I believe, being generally condemned and exploded. And the members of the continental congress have done themselves much honor in advising the American colonies to drop this trade entirely, and resolving not to buy another slave that shall be imported from Africa.

But I think it of importance that this trade should not only be condemned as wrong, but attentively considered in its real nature, and all its shocking attendants and circumstances, which will lead us to think of it with a detestation and horror which this scene of inhumanity, oppression, and cruelty—exceeding every thing of the kind that has ever been perpetrated by the sons of men—is suited to excite; and awaken us to a proper indignation against the authors of this violence and outrage done to their fellow-men, and to feelings of

humanity and pity towards our brethren who are the miserable sufferers. Therefore, though I am not able to paint this horrid scene of barbarity and complicated iniquity to the life, or even to tell the one half which may be told in the short time allotted for this conversation, yet I will suggest a few particulars, leaving you, if you please, to consult the authors who have given a more particular description.

Most of the Africans are in a state of heathenism, and sunk down into that ignorance and barbarity into which mankind naturally fall when destitute of divine revelation. Their lands are fertile, and produce all the necessaries of life. The inhabitants are divided into many distinct nations, or clans, and, of course, are frequently entering into quarrels and open war with each other. The Europeans, English, French, and Dutch have carried on a trade with them for above one hundred years, and have taken advantage of their ignorance and barbarity to persuade them to enter into the inhuman practice of selling one another to the Europeans for the commodities which they carry to them, most of which they stand in no real need of, but might live as well or better without them, particularly spirituous liquors, which have been carried to them in great quantities by the Americans. They, by this means, have tempted and excited the poor blacks to make war upon one another in order to get captives, spreading distress, devastation, and destruction over a vast country, by which many millions have perished, and millions of others have been captivated and sold to the Europeans and Americans into a state of slavery much worse than death. And the inhabitants of the towns near the sea are taught to exert all the art and power they have to entrap and decoy one another, that they may make slaves of them, and sell them to us for rum; by which they intoxicate themselves, and become more brutish and savage than otherwise they could be, so that there are but few instances of sobriety, honesty, or even humanity, in these towns on the sea to which the Europeans have access, and they who live the farthest from these places are the least vicious, and much more civil and humane.

They stand in no need of the rum that is carried there in such quantities, by which so many thousands have been enslaved, and which has spread such infinite mischief among them; and I leave it with you to consider to what a dreadful degree the Americans have, by this abominable practice, brought the curse upon them pronounced by an inspired prophet, and how very applicable it is to this case. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest

look on their nakedness!" (Hab. ii. 15.) And is not this curse evidently come upon us in a dreadful degree, in such a way as to paint itself out, so that he who runs may read it? We have put the bottle to our neighbors' mouths, by carrying immense quantities of rum to them, and enticed them to drink, that we might take advantage of their weakness, and thereby gratify our lusts. By this means multitudes of them have been enslaved and carried to the West India islands, there to be kept to hard labor, and treated ten thousand times worse than dogs. In consequence of which, incredible quantities of rum, and molasses which has been distilled into rum among ourselves, have been imported, the most of which is consumed in intemperance and drunkenness, in such a dreadful degree as to exceed any thing of the kind in any part of the world; by which thousands, yea, millions, have ruined themselves, body and soul, forever. Let any one consider this, and forbear to confess, if he can, that this woe has fallen heavily upon us, and that in such a way and connection as to point out the sinful cause.

But to return. This trade has been carried on for a century and more, and for many years past above a hundred thousand have been brought off the coast in a year, so that many, many millions have been torn from their native country, their acquaintance, relations and friends, and most of them put into a state of slavery, both themselves and their children forever, if they shall have any posterity, much worse than death. When numbers of these wretched creatures are collected by the savages, they are brought into the public market to be sold, all naked as they were born. The more than savage slave merchant views them, and sends his surgeon more particularly to examine them as to the soundness of their limbs, their age, &c. All that are passed as fit for sale are branded with a hot iron in some part of their body with the buyer's mark, and then confined, crowded together in some close hold, till a convenient time to put them on board a ship. When they are brought on board, all are immediately put in irons, except some of the women perhaps, and the small children, where they are so crowded together in that hot climate, that commonly a considerable number die on their passage to the West Indies, occasioned partly by their confinement, partly by the grief and vexation of their minds from the treatment they receive, and the situation in which they find themselves. And a number commonly die after they arrive at the West Indies in seasoning to the climate, so that, commonly, not above seventy in a hundred survive their transportation; by which means about thirty thousand are murdered every year by this

slave trade, which amounts to three millions in a century. When they are brought to the West Indies, they are again exposed to market, as if they were so many beasts, and sold to the highest bidder; where again they are separated according to the humor of the traders, without any regard to their friendships or relations, of husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, &c.; being torn from each other, without the least regard to any thing of this kind, and sent to different places, without any prospect of seeing each other again. They are then put under a taskmaster by the purchasing planter, who appoints them their work and rules over them with rigor and cruelty, following them with his cruel whip, or appointing one to do it, if possible more cruel than himself. The infirm and feeble, the females, and even those who are pregnant, or have infants to take care of, must do their task in the field equally with the rest; or if they fall behind, may be sure to feel the lash of their unmerciful driver. Their allowance of food at the same time is very coarse and scant, and must be cooked by themselves, if cooked at all, when they want to be asleep. And often they have no food but what they procure for themselves, by working on the Sabbath; for that is the only time they have to themselves. And to make any complaint or petition for relief will expose them to some severe punishment, if not a cruel death. The least real or supposable crimes in them are punished in the most cruel manner. And they have no relief, there being no appeal from their masters' sentence and will, who commonly are more like savage beasts than rational, human creatures. And to petition for liberty, though in the most humble and modest terms, is as much as their lives are worth, as few escape the most cruel death who presume to hint any thing of this kind to their masters; it being a maxim with those more than cruel tyrants, that the only way to keep them under, and prevent their thinking of the sweets of liberty, is to punish the least intimation of it in the severest manner, as the most intolerable affront and insult on their masters. Their labor is so hard, and their diet so scant and poor, and they are treated in all respects with such oppression and cruelty, that they do not increase by propagation in the islands, but constantly decrease, so that every planter must every year purchase five at least to every hundred he has on his plantation, in order to keep his number from diminishing.

But it is in vain to attempt a full description of the oppression and cruel treatment these poor creatures receive constantly at the hands of their imperious, unmerciful, worse than Egyptian taskmasters. Words cannot utter it. Volumes might

be written, and not give a detail of a thousandth part of the shockingly cruel things they have suffered, and are constantly suffering. Nor can they possibly be conceived of by any one who has not been an eye witness. And how little a part does he see! They who are witnesses to any part of this horrid scene of barbarous oppression cannot but feel the truth and propriety of Solomon's words: "So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of the oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive." (Ee. iv. 1, 2.) Solomon never saw any oppression like this, unless he looked forward to this very instance in the spirit of prophecy.

A. Sir, there is one important circumstance in favor of the slave trade, or which will at least serve to counterbalance many of the evils you mention, and that is, we bring these slaves from a heathen land to places of gospel light, and so put them under special advantages to be saved.

B. I know this has been mentioned by many in favor of the slave trade; but when examined, will turn greatly against it. It can hardly be said with truth, that the West India islands are places of gospel light. But if they were, are the negroes in the least benefited by it? Have they any access to the gospel? Have they any instruction more than if they were beasts? So far from this, that their masters guard against their having any instruction to their utmost; and if any one would attempt any such thing, it would be at the risk of his life. And all the poor creatures learn of Christianity from what they see in those who call themselves Christians, only serves to prejudice them in the highest degree against the Christian religion. For they not only see the abominably wicked lives of most of those who are called Christians, but are constantly oppressed by them, and receive as cruel treatment from them as they could from the worst of beings. And as to those who are brought to the continent, in the southern colonies,\* and even to New England, so little pains are taken to instruct them, and there is so much to prejudice them against Christianity, that it is a very great wonder and owing to an extraordinary divine interposition, in which we may say

\* It can be proved that, since the war begun, a proposal was made to send some blacks who were qualified to teach Christianity into the southern colonies to teach the blacks there, and attempt to Christianize them; but the gentlemen who were better acquainted with the disposition of slaveholders in those parts discouraged the design, and said the masters of the blacks in general would not suffer any such thing.

God goes out of his common way, that any of them should think favorably of Christianity and cordially embrace it. As to the most of them, no wonder they are unteachable and get no good by the gospel, but they have imbibed the deepest prejudices against it from the treatment they receive from professed Christians; prejudices which most of them are by their circumstances restrained from expressing, while they are fixed in the strongest degree in their minds.

But if this was not the case, and all the slaves brought from Africa were put under the best advantages to become Christians, and they were in circumstances that tended to give them the most favorable idea of Christians and the religion they profess,\* and though all concerned in this trade, and in slavery in general, should have this wholly in view, viz., their becoming Christians, by which they should be eternally happy, yet this would not justify the slave trade, or continuing them in a state of slavery; for, to take this method to Christianize them would be a direct and gross violation of the laws of Christ. He commands us to go and preach the gospel to all nations, to carry the gospel to them, and not to go and with violence bring them from their native country without saying a word to them, or to the nations from whom they are taken, about the gospel or any thing that relates to it.

If the Europeans and Americans had been as much engaged to Christianize the Africans as they have been to enslave them, and had been at half the cost and pains to introduce the gospel among them that they have to captivate and destroy them, we have all the reason in the world to conclude that extensive country, containing such a vast multitude of inhabitants, would have been full of gospel light, and the many nations there civilized and made happy, and a foundation laid for the salvation of millions of millions, and the happy instruments of it have been rewarded ten thousand fold for all their labor and expense. But now, instead of this, what has been done on that coast by those who pass among the negroes for Christians,† has only served to produce and spread the greatest and most deep-rooted prejudices against the Christian religion, and bar the way to that which is above all things desirable—their coming to the knowledge of the truth, that they might be saved. So that, while by the murder-

\* Which cannot be the case so long as they are held in a state of slavery, or they are brought away from their native country in the manner they are; so that the supposition is inconsistent, and destroys itself.

† For they have no way to get an idea of a Christian but from the appearance and conduct of the Europeans or Americans, in the practice of all their unrighteousness, cruelty, profaneness, and debauchery.



ing or enslaving millions of millions they have brought a curse upon themselves and on all that partake with them, they have injured in the highest degree innumerable nations, and done what they could to prevent their salvation and to fasten them down in ignorance and barbarity to the latest posterity. Who can realize all this and not feel a mixture of grief, pity, indignation, and horror, truly ineffable? And must he not be filled with zeal to do his utmost to put a speedy stop to this seven-headed monster of iniquity, with all the horrid train of evils with which it is attended?

And can any one consider all these things, and yet pretend to justify the slave trade, or the slavery of the Africans in America? Is it not impossible that a real Christian who has attended to all this should have any hand in this trade? And it requires the utmost stretch of charity to suppose that any one ever did or can buy or sell an African slave with a sincere view to make a true Christian of him.\*

\* It has been often said in vindication of the slave trade, that the blacks are so cruel to each other that they would put their captives to death if they could not sell them, so that they who buy them save their lives and do them the greatest kindness. And, at the same time, this trade is of the greatest advantage to the West India islands and the Southern States, and to all in connection with them, for white men cannot do the business which is done by the blacks in those hot climates, so that, were not the blacks introduced and improved, all this labor, and the produce of it, must cease.

ANSWER. These suggestions may be a sufficient vindication of the slave trade with the interested and inattentive, but the impartial and judicious will see with how little reason and truth they are urged, when they have attended to the following observations:—

There is no evidence that those people did kill their captives, in general, which they took in war, but the contrary is evident from the account given of them by those Europeans who have travelled and lived longest among them. They represent those nations which have not been corrupted by the whites to be, in general, industrious, friendly, and hospitable, and, in a great measure, happy in the enjoyment of society and the comforts of life. (See "*A short Account of that part of Africa inhabited by the Negroes*," printed at Philadelphia, 1762.) And there is abundant evidence from history, and testimonies incontestable, that these nations have been encouraged and induced to carry on most of their wars, for more than a century past, by the Europeans and Americans, that they might get captives to sell to traders in the souls and bodies of men; and where this trade has been the means of saving one life, it has destroyed millions. Therefore, if professing Christians, instead of encouraging them in their cruelty, and tempting them to destroy, captivate, and sell each other, had taken as much pains to teach them humanity and benevolence as they have to reduce millions to a state of slavery worse than death, they might have saved as many lives as now they have been the means of destroying.

Besides, the cruelty of those savages to each other is no warrant to the slave trader to buy those supposed victims, and put them into a state of slavery which, by their own confession, is worse than death. This, surely, is not an act of mercy, but of cruelty. The voice of mercy and humanity is against selling them as slaves. Who does not know that "one who was the means of preserving a man's life, is not, therefore, entitled to make him a slave, and sell him as he does a piece of goods"?

As to other suggestions, viz., that the blacks are necessary to cultivate the

**A.** All this seems to be little to the purpose, since it was granted, in the beginning of our conversation, that the slave trade, as it has been carried on, is not to be justified. But what is this to the question we proposed to consider, which is, whether it be wrong to hold the blacks we have among us in a state of slavery, or ought to set them free without delay. To this you have said little or nothing as yet.

**B.** All I have said upon the slave trade to show the unrighteousness, the cruelty, the murder, the opposition to Christianity and the spread of the gospel among the Africans, the destruction of whole nations and myriads of souls which are contained in this horrid practice, has been principally with a view to a more clear and satisfactory determination of the question before us, which you have now renewedly proposed, for I think the following proposition may be advanced as un-

lands in those hot climates, since the whites are not able to labor there, it may be observed, that there is not the least evidence of this, but much of the contrary. Whites are healthy, and do the labor in the East Indies which blacks do in the West, in the same climate, and that to much greater advantage, of which authentic accounts have been published. The truth is, most of the whites which are born in the Southern States, or the West Indies, are not educated to labor, but great part of them in idleness and intemperance. The blacks are introduced to do the work, and it is thought a disgrace for a white person to get his living by labor. By this means, the whites in general are vicious, and all imbibe such a haughty and tyrannical spirit by holding so many slaves, that they are above labor, and many of them rather a plague than a blessing to all about them. And whole families are ruined forever by means of this slavery. Whereas, if African slaves had never been introduced, or this slavery were now abolished, and every man had his farm or plantation, — no more than he could cultivate to the best advantage by the help of his children and perhaps a few hired men, — this would introduce industry, temperance, and economy, the land would produce much more than it does now, and the country be filled with industrious, virtuous inhabitants, happy themselves, and blessings to all around them, instead of the comparatively few families now, many of which are a burden to the earth, and a disgrace to human nature. This brings the words of Solomon fresh to mind: "There is a time when one man ruleth over another to his own hurt." (Ec. viii. 9.)

We cannot hesitate to say, this sage observation is verified in the most striking manner, and to the highest degree, in the slavery under consideration. It is an unspeakable hurt to the public, to the commonwealth. If it is inconsistent with republican principles, and tends to overthrow the liberties of those states, and introduce monarchy and tyranny, to have such slavery tolerated among us, and so many petty sovereigns and lords ruling over a number of vassals with despotic sway, their children naturally imbibe those arbitrary principles and grow up as unfit to be useful members of those free, republican states, as do the children of the most haughty monarch on the globe. And those men rule over themselves to their own hurt, and the hurt, the misery, and ruin of their families, temporal and *eternal*. But if it should still be thought by any, or it be in fact true, that those climates cannot be cultivated by whites, let it be remembered that this is no justification of the horrid slave trade and slavery now practised, but it is a good reason why the whites should abandon the places where they cannot live unless it be on the blood of others as good as themselves, and renounce the business which is carried on in the exercise of so much unrighteousness and cruelty. If the blacks only can labor there, the lands are theirs by right, and they ought to be allowed to possess them as freemen, and enjoy the fruit of their labor.

deniable, viz., if the slave trade be unjustifiable and wrong, then our holding the Africans and their children in bondage is unjustifiable and wrong, and the latter is criminal in some proportion to the inexpressible baseness and criminality of the former. For,—

FIRST. If they have been brought into a state of slavery by unrighteousness and violence, they having never forfeited their liberty or given any one a right to enslave and sell them, then purchasing them of these piratical tyrants, and holding them in the same state of bondage into which they, contrary to all right, have brought them, is continuing the exercise of the same unrighteousness and violence towards them. They have yet as much a right to their liberty as ever they had, and to demand it of him who holds them in bondage; and he denies them their right, which is of more worth to them than every thing else they can have in the world, or all the riches the unjust master does or can possess, and therefore injures them in a very high degree every hour he refuses or neglects to set them at liberty. Besides,—

SECONDLY. Holding these blacks in a state of slavery is a practical justification of the slave trade, and so brings the guilt of that on the head of him who so far partakes in this iniquity as to hold one of these a slave who was unrighteously made so by these sons of violence. The old adage, “the partaker is as bad as the thief,” carries such a plain truth in it that every one must discern it, and it is certainly applicable to this case.

It is impossible to buy one of these blacks and detain him a slave, without partaking with him who first reduced him to this state and put it in his power thus to possess him, and practically justifying him for so doing, so as to bring upon himself the guilt of first enslaving him. It is not, therefore, possible for any of our slavekeepers to justify themselves in what they are doing, unless they can justify the slave trade. If they fail here, they bring on themselves an awful degree of the guilt of the whole.

THIRDLY. By keeping these slaves, and buying and selling them, they actually encourage and promote the slave trade; and therefore, in this view, keeping slaves and continuing to buy and sell them is to bring on us the guilt of the slave trade, which is hereby supported. For so long as slaves are bought and possessed, and in demand, so long the African trade will be supported and encouraged.

A. But there is a stop put to the importation of slaves into the American colonies, as they have resolved no more shall be bought. This being the case, the keeping those we have among us in slavery is no encouragement to the slave trade.

*B.* I grant, if this resolution should be perpetual, and extend to the West Indies, it would discourage the slave trade so far as the Americans are concerned in it, but it would be more effectually discountenanced and condemned if slavery was wholly abolished, and it cannot be consistently done without this. For, if it be wrong to import and buy them now, it was always wrong, and, therefore, they that are already slaves among us are injured, and unjustly enslaved, and we have made them our slaves without the least right, and ought to retract it and repair the injury done to them, so far as is in our power, by setting them free and compensating them otherwise so far as we are able. There is, therefore, a palpable inconsistency in resolving to import and buy no more slaves and yet refusing to let those go out free which we have already enslaved, unless there be some insuperable impediment in the way.

The whole I have said concerning the unlawfulness of keeping the blacks in slavery, if the trade by which they are become our slaves be unlawful, may be illustrated by the following example:—

A number of robbers invaded a certain province, and took off most of their goods and effects, and carried them to a neighboring province and sold them to the inhabitants, and the robbers finding this encouragement, continued the practice for many years. At length the people of the injured province applied to their neighbors, who had their goods of the robbers, and were now in possession of them, and asked them to restore what was taken from them by violence, and to which they had a good and indisputable right, it being impossible these robbers could give a right to what they had unjustly taken from them; but the people, in whose possession the stolen goods were found, utterly refused to deliver them up to the injured people who demanded them. They told them they had indeed been greatly injured, and they must condemn the robbers as very injurious and cruel in what they had done, but as they now had these goods in their own possession, they intended to keep them, and looked on themselves under no obligation to deliver them up, though they suffered so much and would probably perish for want of them; and they intended still to buy all the robbers should bring to them.

To this the injured replied, “By partaking with these robbers in receiving the goods at their hands, you practically justify their conduct, and must share with them in their guilt. For by this means you encourage them, and are determined to go on to encourage them in this violence and rapine; and by condemning them, you equally condemn yourselves, and

must remain under this condemnation till you restore the goods we demand, and resolve never to purchase any thus taken from us by violence."

Upon this they determined to purchase no more of them, but refused to deliver up what they had already got in possession. But the oppressed told them, they did right in resolving to injure them no more in that way; but they were now very inconsistent with themselves, for if it were wrong to purchase any more, it was as wrong to withhold what they had already gotten in possession; and they had no other way to justify themselves in detaining their goods, and to be consistent, but by proceeding to take whatever those robbers should bring to them in future, and justifying themselves in so doing and the robbers in all their depredations.

A. This reasoning looks something plausible, I confess; but the Holy Scripture approves of making and keeping slaves, and this surely is sufficient to keep us in countenance.

B. I hope you will not appeal to the Holy Scripture in support of a practice which you and every one else must allow to be so inexpressibly unjust, inhuman, and cruel, as is the slave trade, and, consequently, so glaringly contrary to the whole tenor of divine revelation; and if the slave trade is such a gross violation of every divine precept, it is impossible to vindicate the slavery to which the Africans have been reduced by this trade from the Holy Scripture. Of this we have such a certainty, *a priori*, that would be a horrid reproach of divine revelation to pretend this practice can be supported by that, or even to look into it with any hope or expectation of finding any thing there in favor of it; and if there be any passages in the Bible which are capable of a construction in favor of this practice, we may be very certain it is a wrong one. In a word, if any kind of slavery can be vindicated by the Holy Scriptures, we are already sure our making and holding the negroes our slaves, as we do, cannot be vindicated by any thing we can find there, but is condemned by the whole of divine revelation. However, I am willing to hear what you can produce from Scripture in favor of any kind of slavery.

A. You know that a curse was pronounced on the posterity of Ham for his wickedness, in the following words: "A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." He could not be a servant unto his brethren unless they made him so, or at least held him in servitude. The curse could not take place unless they executed it, and they seem to be by God appointed to do this; therefore, while we, the children of Japheth, are making such abject slaves of the blacks, the children of Ham, we are only executing the righteous curse denounced upon

them; which is so far from being wrong in us, that it would be a sin, even disobedience to the revealed will of God, to refuse to make slaves of them, and attempt to set them at liberty.

*B.* Do you think, my good sir, it was the duty of Pharaoh to make the Israelites serve him and the Egyptians, and to afflict them by ruling over them with rigor, and holding them in hard and cruel bondage, because God had expressly foretold this, and said it should be done? And was the Assyrian king blameless while he executed the judgments which God had threatened to inflict on his professing people? Did God's threatening them with those evils warrant this king to distress, captivate, and destroy them as he did? And will you say the Jews did right in crucifying our Lord, because by this they fulfilled the Scriptures, declaring that thus it must be? Your argument, if it is of any force, will assert and justify all this, and, therefore, I hope will be renounced by you, and by all who have the least regard for the Holy Scripture, with proper abhorrence.

But, if this argument were not so fraught with absurdity and impiety as it really is, and it were granted to be forcible with respect to all upon whom the mentioned curse was denounced, yet it would not justify our enslaving the Africans, for they are not the posterity of Canaan, who was the only son of Ham that was doomed to be a servant of servants. The other sons of Ham and their posterity are no more affected with this curse than the other sons of Noah and their posterity. Therefore, this prediction is as much of a warrant for the Africans' enslaving us, as it is for us to make slaves of them. The truth is, it gives not the least shadow of a right to any one of the children of Noah to make slaves of any of their brethren.\*

*A.* The people of Israel were allowed by God to buy and make slaves from the nations that were round about them, and the strangers that lived among them,—which could not have been the case if this was wrong and unjust,—and why have not we an equal right to do the same?

*B.* And why have not we an equal right to invade any nation and land, as they did the land of Canaan, and destroy

\* If it should be asked, "Why should Canaan be singled out from the other sons of Ham, and cursed for the sins of his father? May we not conclude that the curse fell on all Ham's posterity, and that Canaan only is mentioned as including all the rest?"—it must be answered, No, by no means; we have no warrant to do this. The father sinned, and God might justly have cursed all his posterity; but, in his wisdom and sovereign goodness, he cursed only one branch of the family; and how effectually this has taken place the Scripture informs us.

them all, men, women, and children, and beasts, without saving so much as one alive? It was right for the Israelites to do this, because they had a divine permission and direction to do it, as the God of Israel had a right to destroy the seven nations of Canaan in what way he thought best, and to direct whom he pleased to do it. And it was right for them to make bond-servants of the nations round them, they having an express permission to do it from him who has a right to dispose of all men as he pleases. God saw fit, for wise reasons, to allow the people of Israel thus to make and possess slaves; but is this any license to *us* to enslave any of our fellow-men, any more than their being allowed to kill the seven nations in Canaan is a warrant to us to kill any of our fellow-men whom we please and are able to destroy, and take possession of their estates? This must be answered in the negative by every one who will allow himself a moment's reflection. God gave many directions and laws to the Jews which had no respect to mankind in general; and this under consideration has all the marks of such a one. There is not any thing in it, or relating to it, from whence can be deduced the least evidence that it was designed to be a regulation for all nations through every age of the world, but every thing to the contrary. The children of Israel were then distinguished from all other nations on earth; they were God's peculiar people, and favored on many accounts above others, and had many things in their constitution and laws that were designed to keep up their separation and distinction from other nations, and to make the special favor of Heaven towards them more apparent to all who had any knowledge of them; and this law respecting bondage is suited to answer these ends. This distinction is now at an end, and all nations are put upon a level; and Christ, who has taken down the wall of separation, has taught us to look on all nations as our neighbors and brethren, without any respect of persons, and to love all men as ourselves, and to do to others as we would they should treat us; by which he has most effectually abolished this permission given to the Jews, as well as many other institutions which were peculiar to them.

Besides, that this permission was not designed for all nations and ages will be very evident if we consider what such a supposition implies; for if this be so, then all other nations had a right to make slaves of the Jews. The Egyptians had a right to buy and sell them, and keep them all in bondage forever, and the nations round about Canaan had a right to bring them into bondage, as they sometimes did, and the Babylonians and Romans had a good warrant to reduce them to a

state of captivity and servitude. And the Africans have a good right to make slaves of us and our children; the inhabitants of Great Britain may lawfully make slaves of all the Americans, and transport us to England, and buy and sell us in open market as they do their cattle and horses, and perpetuate our bondage to the latest generation; and the Turks have a good right to all the Christian slaves they have among them, and to make as many more slaves of us and our children as shall be in their power, and to hold them and their children in bondage to the latest posterity. According to this, every man has a warrant to make a bondslave of his neighbor whenever it lies in his power, and no one has any right to his own freedom any longer than he can keep himself out of the power of others. For instance: if the blacks now among us should, by some remarkable providence, have the power in their hands to reduce us, they have a right to make us and our children their slaves, and we should have no reason to complain.

This would put mankind into such a state of perpetual war and confusion, and is so contrary to our loving our neighbor as ourselves, that he who has the least regard for his fellow-men, or the divine law, must reject it, and the principle from which it flows, with the greatest abhorrence. Let no Christian, then, plead this permission to the Jews, to make bondslaves of their neighbors, as a warrant to hold the slaves he has made, and, consequently, for universal slavery.

*A.* But what will you do with those passages in the New Testament which are in favor of slavery, and suppose Christian masters to have Christian slaves,—and the masters are so far from being directed to free them that it is supposed they may hold them in bondage,—and their mutual duties in this relation are inculcated? Paul, the apostle, is so far from being disposed to have servants made free, that he says, “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor.” (1 Tim. vi. 1.) And in the following words supposes that believing masters had servants, whom he exhorts to serve such masters with the more cheerfulness, out of respect to their Christian character.

*B.* Before I make a direct answer to this I beg leave to remind you, that, whatever other kind of slavery these passages will vindicate, they certainly will not support the slave trade, and that slavery of the negroes into which they have been brought by this trade, which is manifestly unrighteous from beginning to end; and, therefore, can be nothing to our present purpose, viz., to justify Christian masters among us in holding the blacks and their children in bondage.



I grant there are bondservants who are made so, and may be held in this state, consistent with justice, humanity, and benevolence. They are such, who have forfeited their liberty to the community of which they are members, by some particular crimes, and by debt in some instances; and are for this condemned to servitude for a longer or shorter time, and sold by the civil magistrate. And persons may put themselves into this state by their own voluntary act. There were doubtless such in the apostle's days; and if master and servant, in this case, were converted to Christianity, the servant would still be under the yoke, and the apostle's exhortation highly proper. Therefore if every master, when he embraced Christianity, was obliged to free all his servants who had not evidently forfeited their liberty, and not one who refused to do this was admitted into a Christian church, yet there might be many masters and servants in the first Christian churches; and the passages of Scripture under consideration prove no more than this, and therefore will not justify any master holding one servant in bondage against his will, so much as an hour, who has not evidently brought himself into this state by his own crimes, and been adjudged to it, after proper trial, by the civil magistrate. These Scriptures, therefore, are infinitely far from justifying the slavery under consideration; for it cannot be made to appear that one in a thousand of these slaves has done any thing to forfeit his own liberty. And if there were any such, they have never been condemned to slavery by any who are proper judges, or had any authority to act in the affair. But if this were the case of any, they certainly could not forfeit the liberty of their children, and cause them to be born slaves.

But it may be further observed, that it might be difficult in many cases at that day to determine what servants were justly in a state of bondage, and who had a right to their liberty, (which is not the case with respect to the slaves whose cause I am now pleading.) And the apostles did not think it their business to examine into every instance of slavery, and find the original ground of it, in order to determine whether the servant ought to be set free or not; and as it was taken for granted by all, or most, that the slavery which then took place was generally just, and if every one who embraced Christianity and had slaves must undergo a strict examination, and be obliged to dismiss his servants unless he could produce good evidence that they had forfeited their liberty, this, as circumstances then were, would have greatly prejudiced the world against the Christian religion and tended to retard its propagation; I say, considering all these things, the apostles might

be directed not to intermeddle in this affair so far as to inquire into every instance of slavery, whether it was just or not; but to treat it as if it were so, unless there were particular, positive evidence of the contrary in any instances; only giving general rules for the direction and conduct of masters and servants, which, if applied and put into practice, would not only render this relation comfortable where it ought to subsist, but would effect the liberty of all the servants who were evidently reduced to that state unjustly, and were suited to put an end to slavery in general. Thus the apostle Paul, speaking to masters, says, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." (Col. iv. 1.) The master who conformed to this rule must not only treat his servants with equity in all instances, but must set at liberty all who were evidently unjustly enslaved, and therefore had a right to their freedom. And if any Christian master refused to do this, he would bring upon him the censure of the church for disregarding this apostolic rule. (2 Thess. iii. 6.) And the same apostle says to the servant, "If thou mayest be made free, use it rather." (1 Cor. vii. 21.) In these words it is declared that slavery is, in itself considered, undesirable, and a calamity in every instance of it, and therefore that it ought to be avoided and abolished as far as possible. And not only the servant is warranted and commanded to desire and seek to be made free, but the master is also implicitly required to set him at liberty, if there be no insuperable impediment in the way; for if the servant ought to desire and attempt to obtain his freedom, the master ought to desire it also, and assist him to obtain it if it can be effected, and will do it if he loves his servant as himself; and the church to which the servant belongs, and every member of it, ought to do all in their power to procure the freedom of every such servant; for will any one say they ought not to do their utmost in assisting their poor suffering brother to obtain his liberty, which God has commanded him to desire and seek? This apostolic command, therefore, being properly regarded, would soon put an end to most instances of slavery in the Christian church, if it did not wholly abolish it, especially at this day, when many of the impediments in the way of freeing slaves, which were in the apostles' days, are removed. And it may be left to the consciences of all slaveholders among us, whether, if it had been left to them, such a direction and command would ever have been given to any servant whatever, as is here given by the apostle; and whether, now it is given, they approve of it and practice accordingly. So far from it, that most of them, even professing Christians, hold their servants at such a distance, and treat them in such a manner,

that the poor servant dare not so much as treat with his master about his freedom, and if he should say a word, is pretty sure to receive nothing but angry frowns, if not blows. And if any one undertakes to plead the cause of these oppressed poor, whose right is turned aside in the gate and they have no helper, he may expect to feel the resentment of almost every keeper of slaves who knows him. And is there one church now in this land who are ready to do what is in their power to obtain the freedom of the slaves which belong to them, or are willing calmly to consider and debate the question among themselves, whether it be right to hold the negroes in bondage? Where is the church that has done any thing of this kind? \* And how few churches are to be found that would not be greatly disturbed and filled with resentment if the question were seriously proposed and urged to be considered?

Let none who are conscious all this is true urge the apostle Paul's authority in favor of the slave-keeping which is practised in British America.

But to return. The apostle seems to have conducted in this case as he did in that of civil government. He considered this as a divine institution, and pointed out the end and design of it, and the duty of civil rulers and of the subject, without particularly applying it to the government Christians were then under, so as expressly to justify or condemn the particular form of government that then took place, or the conduct of those who then had the civil authority in their hands, and that for very obvious reasons, grounded on the state and circumstances of the church and of public affairs at that day. We may as well infer from this that the civil governors of that day were not unjust and tyrannical, which is most contrary to known fact, as we can that the slavery which then took place was in general just and right, from his pointing out the duties of masters and servants without mentioning and condemning any particular instances of unjust slavery.

A. You well observed that the apostles did not intermeddle with the affair of slavery so as to condemn masters for holding their slaves, or tell the servants their masters had no right to keep them in bondage, but ought to free them. I wish all were as wise and prudent now, especially ministers of the

\* Since the first edition of this dialogue, a number of churches in New England have purged themselves from this iniquity, and determined not to tolerate the holding of the Africans in slavery. If all the churches in these United States would come into the same measure, and imitate the Friends, called Quakers, in this article, would they not act more like Christian churches than they now do?

gospel; but all are not so. Many make such a clamor about holding our negroes in bondage, and some ministers have of late said so much in public about freeing our slaves, and have so inveighed against the African slave trade, and even keeping our blacks in slavery, that many of the negroes are become very uneasy, and are much more engaged to obtain their liberty than they used to be.

I think if any thing be said on this subject it should be in private; and not a word of this kind should be lispd in the hearing of our servants, much less ought ministers to say any thing about it in public, lest the blacks should all take it into their heads that they are treated hardly, and never be easy till they are set at liberty.

*B.* It has been observed, there were reasons peculiar to the state of things at that time, why the apostles should not be so particular on this head; which reasons do not take place now. The slavery that now takes place is in a Christian land, and without the express sanction of civil government; and it is all of the same kind and from one original, which is most notoriously unjust, and if it be unrighteous in one instance, it is so in almost every instance; and the unrighteousness of it is most apparent, and most masters have no color of claim to hold their servants in bondage; and this is become a general and crying sin, for which we are under the awful frowns of Heaven. These things, which make the case so different from the slavery which took place in the apostles' days, may be a good reason of a different conduct, and make it duty to oppose and bear testimony, both in public and more privately, against this evil practice, which is so evidently injurious to individuals, and threatens our ruin as a people.

As to making servants uneasy, and desirous of liberty, I would observe, that most of them do not want to be informed that they are greatly injured and oppressed; that they are reduced to a state of slavery without the least color of justice. They have sense and discerning enough to be sensible of this, without being told; and they think much of it almost every day, though they are obliged to keep it to themselves, having none to pity them, or so much as hear their complaints. They have a thousand times more discerning and sensibility in this case than their masters, or most others; and their aversion to slavery, and desires of liberty, are inextinguishable. Therefore, their hearing it asserted that they ought to be set at liberty gives them no new light and conviction, except it be, that he who asserts it has some discerning of what they have long known and most sensibly felt, and has courage enough to assert that in their favor which they have long felt the truth

of, but dared not so much as lisp it out. But if by this means any of your servants should be more fully convinced of their right to liberty, and the injustice done them in making them slaves, will this be such a dreadful evil? Would you desire they should be held in ignorance, that you may exercise your tyranny without opposition or trouble from any quarter? As reasonably might Pharaoh be angry, and complain of Moses and Aaron for saying a word to those whom he had reduced to slavery about their cruel bondage and their obtaining their liberty.

It has always been the way of tyrants to take great pains to keep their vassals in ignorance, especially to hide from them the tyranny and oppression of which they are the subjects; and for this reason they are enemies to the liberty of the press, and are greatly provoked when their conduct is set in a true light before the public, and the unrighteousness they practise properly exposed. The complaint we are now considering seems to be of the same kind with this, and well becomes all those petty tyrants who have slaves in their possession, which they are conscious they cannot vindicate, but the unrighteousness will be detected if free inquiry and freedom of speech cannot be suppressed; and this complaint is of the same kind with the conduct of the masters of slaves in the West Indies in opposing their being taught any thing of Christianity, because they know every gleam of this light carries a discovery of the unrighteousness of the treatment they receive.

The present situation of our public affairs and our struggle for liberty, and the abundant conversation this occasions in all companies, while the poor negroes look on and hear what an aversion we have to slavery and how much liberty is prized, they often hearing it declared publicly and in private, as the voice of all, that slavery is more to be dreaded than death, and we are resolved to live free or die, etc.; this, I say, necessarily leads them to attend to their own wretched situation more than otherwise they could. They see themselves deprived of all liberty and property, and their children after them, to the latest posterity, subject to the will of those who appear to have no feeling for their misery, and are guilty of many instances of hard-heartedness and cruelty towards them, while they think themselves very kind; and therefore, to make the least complaint, would be deemed the height of arrogance and abuse; and often if they have a comparatively good master now, with constant dread they see a young one growing up, who bids fair to rule over them, or their children, with rigor.

They see the slavery the Americans dread as worse than death is lighter than a feather compared to their heavy doom,

and may be called liberty and happiness when contrasted with the most abject slavery and unutterable wretchedness to which they are subjected; and in this dark and dreadful situation they look round and find no help -- no pity -- no hope! And when they observe all this cry and struggle for liberty for ourselves and children, and see themselves and their children wholly overlooked by us, and behold the sons of liberty oppressing and tyrannizing over many thousands of poor blacks who have as good a claim to liberty as themselves, they are shocked with the glaring inconsistency, and wonder they themselves do not see it. You must not, therefore, lay it to the few who are pleading the cause of these friendless, distressed poor, that they are more uneasy than they used to be in a sense of their wretched state and from a desire of liberty: there is a more mighty and irresistible cause than this, viz., all that passes before them in our public struggle for liberty.

And why should the ministers of the gospel hold their peace and not testify against this great and public iniquity, which we have reason to think is one great cause of the public calamities we are now under? How can they refuse to plead the cause of these oppressed poor against the cruel oppressor? They are commanded to lift up their voice, and cry aloud, and show the people their sins. Have we not reason to fear many of them have offended Heaven by their silence, through fear of the masters, who stand ready to make war against any one who attempts to deprive them of their slaves, or because they themselves have slaves which they are not willing to give up?

Might they not fully expose this iniquity, and bear a constant testimony against it, in such a manner as would have no tendency to influence our servants to behave ill in any respect, by giving them, at the same time, proper cautions and directions?

*A.* It is impossible to free all our negroes, especially at once and in present circumstances, without injuring them, at least many of them, and the public to a great degree. Why, then, is this urged so vehemently now? I think this proceeds from a zeal not according to knowledge.

*B.* If it be not a sin, an open, flagrant violation of all the rules of justice and humanity, to hold these slaves in bondage, it is indeed folly to put ourselves to any trouble and expense in order to free them. But if the contrary be true, if it be a sin of a crimson dye, which is most particularly pointed out by the public calamities which have come upon us, from which we have no reason to expect deliverance till we put away the evil of our doings, this reformation cannot be urged with too

much zeal, nor attempted too soon, whatever difficulties are in the way. The more and greater these are, the more zealous and active should we be in removing them. You had need to take care, lest from selfish motives and a backwardness to give up what you unrighteously retain, you are joining with the slothful man to cry, "There is a lion in the way! a lion is in the streets!" (Pr. xxvi. 13,) while there is no insurmountable difficulty but that which lies in your own heart.

No wonder there are many and great difficulties in reforming an evil practice of this kind, which has got such deep root by length of time and is become so common. But it does not yet appear that they cannot be removed by the united wisdom and strength of the American colonies, without any injury to the slaves or disadvantage to the public. Yea, the contrary is most certain, as the slaves cannot be put into a more wretched situation, ourselves being judges, and the community cannot take a more likely step to escape ruin, and obtain the smiles and protection of Heaven. This matter ought, doubtless, to be attended to by the general assemblies, and continental and provincial congresses; and if they were as much united and engaged in devising ways and means to set at liberty these injured slaves as they are to defend themselves from tyranny, it would soon be effected. There were, without doubt, many difficulties and impediments in the way of the Jews liberating those of their brethren they had brought into bondage in the days of Jeremiah. But when they were besieged by the Chaldeans, and this their sin was laid before them, and they were threatened with desolation if they did not reform, they broke through every difficulty, and set their servants at liberty.

And how great must have been the impediments, how many the seeming unanswerable objections against reforming that gross violation of the divine command in Ezra's time, by their marrying strange wives, of which so many of the Jews were guilty, and the hand of the princes and rulers had been chief in this trespass! Yet the pious zeal of Ezra, and those who joined with him, and their wisdom and indefatigable efforts, conquered every obstacle and brought them to a thorough reformation. Would not the like zeal, wisdom, and resolution, think you, soon produce a reformation of this much greater abomination, by finding out an effectual method to put away all our slaves? Surely we have no reason to conclude it cannot be done till we see a suitable zeal and resolution among all orders of men, and answerable attempts are thoroughly made.

Let this iniquity be viewed in its true magnitude, and in the

shocking light in which it has been set in this conversation ; let the wretched case of the poor blacks be considered with proper pity and benevolence, together with the probably dreadful consequence to this land of retaining them in bondage, and all objections against liberating them would vanish. The mountains that are now raised up in the imagination of many would become a plain, and every difficulty surmounted.

Pharaoh and the Egyptians could not bear to think of letting the Hebrews go out free from the bondage to which they had reduced them, and it may be presumed they had as many weighty objections against it as can be thought of against freeing the slaves among us. Yet they were at length brought to drop them all, and willing to send them out free, and to be ready to part with any thing they had in order to promote it.\*

If many thousands of our children were slaves in Algiers, or any parts of the Turkish dominions, and there were but few families in the American colonies that had not some child or near relation in that sad state, without any hope of freedom to them or their children unless there were some very extraordinary exertion of the colonies to effect it, how would the attention of all the country be turned to it ! How greatly should we be affected with it ! Would it not become the chief topic of conversation ? Would any cost or labor be spared, or any difficulty or hazard be too great to go through, in order to obtain their freedom ? If there were no greater difficulties than there are in the case before us, yea, if they were ten times greater, would they not be soon surmounted as very inconsiderable ? I know you, sir, and every one else, must answer in the affirmative without hesitation. And why are we not as much affected with the slavery of the many thousands of blacks among ourselves whose miserable state is before our eyes ? And why should we not be as much engaged to relieve them ? The reason is obvious. It is because they are negroes, and fit for nothing but slaves, and we have been used to look on them in a mean, contemptible light, and our education has filled us with strong prejudices against them, and led us to consider them, not as our brethren, or in any degree on a level with us, but as quite another species of animals, made only to serve us and our children, and as happy in bondage as in any other state. This has banished all

\* It may be well worthy our serious consideration, whether we have not reason to fear the hand of God, which is now stretched out against us, will lie upon us, and the strokes grow heavier, unless we reform this iniquity, so clearly pointed out by the particular manner in which God is correcting us ; and whether we have any reason to hope or pray for deliverance till this reformation takes place.



attention to the injustice that is done them, and any proper sense of their misery or the exercise of benevolence towards them. If we could only divest ourselves of these strong prejudices which have insensibly fixed on our minds, and consider them as by nature and by right on a level with our brethren and children, and those of our neighbors, and that benevolence which loves our neighbor as ourselves, and is agreeable to truth and righteousness, we should begin to feel towards them, in some measure at least, as we should towards our children and neighbors in the case above supposed, and be as much engaged for their relief.

If parents have a son pressed on board a king's ship, how greatly are they affected with it! They are filled with grief and distress, and will cheerfully be at almost any cost and pains to procure his liberty; and we wonder not at it, but think their exercises and engagedness for his deliverance very just, and stand ready to condemn him who has no feeling for them and their son, and is not ready to afford all the assistance in his power in order to recover him. At the same time we behold vast numbers of blacks among us, torn from their native country and all their relations, not to serve on board a man-of-war for a few years, but to be abject, despised slaves for life, and their children after them, and yet have not the least feelings for them or desire of their freedom. These very parents, perhaps, have a number of negro slaves on whom they have not the least pity, and stand ready highly to resent it if any one espouses their cause so much as to propose they should be set at liberty. What reason for this partiality? Ought this so to be? An impartial person, who is not under the prejudices of interest, education, and custom, is shocked with it beyond all expression. The poor negroes have sense enough to see and feel it, but have no friend to speak a word for them, none to whom they may complain.

It has been observed, that if the general assemblies of these American colonies would take this matter in hand in earnest, with a concern and resolution answerable to its real importance, and the whole community were properly disposed and engaged, the freedom of the slaves among us might soon be effected without injury to the public or those who shall be set at liberty, but greatly to the advantage of both. But if this should be neglected, will it excuse individuals who have slaves in their continuing to hold them in bondage? I think not. If you, sir, had as many children in slavery at Algiers as you have African slaves in your house, would you take no pains and devise no method to obtain their liberty till the public should make some provision for the emancipation of all slaves

there? If any opportunity should present to obtain their liberty, would you not greedily embrace it, though at much hazard and expense? And if their master should refuse to let them go free till there was a general emancipation of the Christian slaves in that country, would you justify him as acting a proper, humane, and benevolent part? I trow not. How then can you excuse yourself, and deliver your own soul, while you have no compassion for these black children in your house, and refuse to break the yoke, the galling yoke, from off their necks, because your neighbors will not be so just and humane to theirs?

Some masters say they will give up their slaves if all masters will do the same, but seem to think they are excused from setting theirs free so long as there is not a general manumission. What has just been observed is suited, I think, to show the insufficiency of this excuse. Besides, if you desire to have all our slaves freed, why do you not set an example by liberating your own? This might influence others to do the same, and then you might with a good grace plead the cause of these poor Africans; whereas, while you retain your own slaves your mouth is stopped, and your example serves to strengthen others, and keep them in countenance, while they practise this abominable oppression.

*A.* My servants have cost me a great deal of money, and it is not reasonable I should lose all that. If the public will indemnify me and pay me what my servants are worth, I am willing to free them, and none can reasonably desire to do it on any other consideration.

*B.* If your neighbor buys a horse, or any beast, of a thief who stole it from you, while he had no thought that it was stolen, would you not think you had a right to demand your horse of your neighbor, and pronounce him very unjust if he should refuse to deliver him to you till he had received the whole sum he had given for him? And have not your servants as great a right to themselves, to their liberty, as you have to your stolen horse? They have been stolen and sold, and you have bought them, in your own wrong, when you had much more reason to think they were stolen than he who bought your horse had to mistrust he was trading with a thief. Though your horse has passed through many hands, and been sold ten times, you think you have a right to demand and take him, in whose soever hand you find him, without refunding a farthing of what he cost him; and yet, though your negroes can prove their right to themselves, and constantly make a demand upon you to deliver them up, you refuse till they pay the full price you gave for them, because

the civil law will not oblige you to do it. "Thou hypocrite!" (Luke xiii. 15.)

Had you not been amazingly inconsiderate and stupid, you would have concluded these men were stolen, and known that no man had a right to sell them, or you to buy them. And must they be forever deprived of their right, which is worth more to them than all you possess, because you have been so foolish and wicked as to buy them, and no one appears to prevent your losing by the bargain? You would do well to consider the awful denunciation by Jeremiah: "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work!" He who refuses to free his negroes, that he may save his money and lay it up for his children, and retains his slaves for them to tyrannize over, leaves them but a miserable inheritance—infinitely worse than nothing.

Besides, if indifferent persons were to judge, it would doubtless be found that many of your servants, if not all, have much more than earned what they cost you,—some of them double and treble, yea, ten times as much,—and, in this view, you ought to let them go out free, and not send them away empty, but furnish them liberally out of your store, agreeably to the divine command, they having a much better right to part of your estate than your children, and, it may be, much more likely to make a good improvement of it.

A. You speak of servants earning so much; but, for my part, I think not so much of this. Mine have never been much profit to me, and most of them do not pay for their victuals and clothes, but are constantly running in debt.

B. The master is not a proper judge in this case. How common is it for men who hire others to complain that the laborers do not earn the wages they give, and that they are continually losing by all the labor they hire. And, if it were wholly left to him who hires what wages he should give the laborer, and he was accountable to none, how soon would his hire be reduced to little or nothing. The lordly, selfish employer would soon find out that his laborers hardly earned the food he was obliged to find them. Let your uninterested, judicious neighbors judge between you and your servants in this matter, and we will give credit to their verdict. And surely you have no reason to expect we will rely on yours, as you seem not really to believe it yourself, since it looks like a contradiction to your own declaration and practice; for you have been speaking of your servants as of as much worth to you at least as their first cost, and represented it as giving

up your interest if you should free them without a compensation; whereas, if what you now say be true, you will lose nothing by freeing them immediately, but rather get rid of a burden now on your hands. And if this be true, why do you not free them without delay? Your holding them in slavery is a practical contradiction to what you have now suggested.

I grant, what is evident to all the discerning who attend to it, that the introduction of such a number of slaves among us is a public detriment—an injury to the commonwealth; and, therefore, in this view, the practice ought by all means to be discouraged and abolished by our legislators. This, however, is consistent with individuals getting estates by the labor of their slaves; and that they are, in fact, in many instances very profitable to their owners, none can deny. And if this was not so, I should be very certain of obtaining what I am pleading for, even a general manumission.

A. You have repeatedly spoke of our slaves being hardly treated and abused. There may, perhaps, be some instances of this among us; but I believe they are generally treated very well, and many of them much better than they deserve. My servants, I am sure, have no reason to complain; they live as well as I do myself, and, in many respects, much better.

B. We will take it for granted, for once, that all you have said is true, and that your slaves are treated as well as they can be while they are held in a state of slavery. But will this atone for your making them your slaves, and taking from them that which is better to them than not only the best living, but all the riches on earth, and is as much to be prized as life itself—their liberty? As well, yea, with much more reason, may a highway robber tell a gentleman, from whom he has taken all his money, he has no reason to complain, since he had spared his life which was at his mercy, nor had wounded him or stripped him of his clothes, and go away pleased with the thought that he had treated him with great kindness and generosity.

If a ruffian should seize, ravish, and carry off a young virgin from all her relations and friends into some lonely cave in the wilderness, and when he got full possession of her there should treat her with great kindness, providing for her every necessary and comfort she could have in that situation; and when he was told of his violence and cruelty, and urged to restore her to her former liberty, he should refuse to release her, and, to justify himself, allege his kind treatment of her, that she had all the comforts of life, and lived better than himself,—would not this be so far from justifying him in the sight of the world, or being the least excuse for his barbarous treat-

ment of her, that his offering it as such would be considered as a striking evidence of his stupidity, and that he was an unfeeling, inhuman wretch? Whether such an instance is in any measure applicable to the case before us, I leave you to judge.

But I must now ask leave to take back what was just now granted, and observe that you are not a proper judge of your treatment of your slaves, and that you may think you treat them very well, in some instances at least, if not in a constant way; they justly think themselves used very hardly, being really subjected to many hardships which you would very sensibly feel and resent if you were in their place, or should see one of your children a slave in Algiers treated so by his master. There are but few masters of slaves, I believe, who do not use them in a hard, unreasonable manner, in some instances at least, and most do so in a constant way; so that an impartial, attentive bystander will be shocked with it, while the master is wholly insensible of any wrong. They who from us have visited the West Indies, have beheld how servants are used by their masters there with a degree of horror, and pronounced them very unreasonable and barbarous; while the master, and perhaps his other domestics, have thought they were used well, being accustomed to such usage and never once reflecting that these blacks were in any sense on a level with themselves, or that they have the least right to the treatment white people may reasonably expect of one another, and being habituated to view these slaves more beneath themselves than the very beasts really are. And are we not most of us educated in these prejudices, and led to view the slaves among us in such a mean, despicable light, as not to be sensible of the abuses they suffer, when if we or our children should receive such treatment from any of our fellow-men it would appear terrible in our sight? The Turks are by education and custom taught to view the Christian slaves among them so much beneath themselves and in such an odious light, that while they are treating our brethren and children, we being judges, in the most unreasonable and cruel manner, they have not one thought that they injure them in the least degree.

Are you sure your slaves have a sufficiency of good food in season, and that they never want for comfortable clothing and bedding? Do you take great care to deal as well by them in these things as you would wish others would treat your own children were they slaves in a strange land? If your servants complain, are you ready to attend to them? Or do you in such cases frown upon them, or do something worse, so as to discourage their ever applying to you whatever they may

suffer, having learned that this would only be making bad worse? Do you never fly into a passion and deal with them in great anger, deciding matters respecting them, and threatening them, and giving sentence concerning them, from which they have no appeal, and perhaps proceed to correct them, when to a calm bystander you appear more fit to be confined in Bedlam than to have the sovereign, uncontrollable dominion over your brethren as the sole lawgiver, judge, and executioner? Do not even your children domineer over your slaves? Must they not often be at the beck of an ungoverned, peevish child in the family; and if they do not run at his or her call, and are not all submission and obedience, must they not expect the frowns of their masters, if not the whip?

If none of these things, my good sir, take place in your family, have we not reason to think you almost a singular instance? How common are things of this kind, or worse, taking place between masters and their slaves? In how few instances, if in any, are slaves treated as the masters would wish to have their own children treated in like circumstances? How few are fit to be masters; to have the sovereign dominion over a number of their fellow-men, being his property, and wholly at his disposal, who must abide his sentence and orders, however unreasonable, without any possibility of relief?

A. I believe my slaves are so far from thinking themselves abused, or being in the least uneasy in a state of slavery, that they have no desire to be made free; and if their freedom were offered to them, they would refuse to accept it.

B. I must take leave to call this in question, sir; and I think you believe it in contradiction to all reason and the strongest feelings of human nature, till they have declared it themselves, having had opportunity for due deliberation, and being in circumstances to act freely, without the least constraint or fear.

There are many masters (if we believe what they say) who please themselves with this fond opinion of their goodness to their slaves, and their choice of a state of slavery in preference to freedom, without the least foundation, and while the contrary is known to be true by all who are acquainted with their slaves. If they really believe this, they by it only discover great insensibility and want of proper reflection. They have not so much as put themselves in the place of their slaves, so as properly and with due sensibility to consult what would be their own feelings on such a supposition. Have they themselves lost all desire of freedom? Are they destitute of all taste of the sweets of it, and have they no aversion to slavery for themselves and children? If they have these

feelings, what reason have they to conclude their servants have not?

But it seems most of those masters do not fully believe what they so often say on this head, for they have never made the trial, nor can they be persuaded to do it. Let them offer freedom to their servants and give them opportunity to choose for themselves without being under the most distant constraint; and if they then deliberately choose to continue their slaves, the matter will be fairly decided, and they may continue to possess them with a good conscience.\*

Slaves are generally under such disadvantages and restraints, that however much they desire liberty they dare not so much as mention it to their masters; and if their master should order them into his presence and ask them whether they had a desire to be made free, many would not dare to declare their choice lest it should offend him, and instead of obtaining their freedom bring themselves into a more evil case than they were in before, as the children of Israel did by desiring Pharaoh to free them.

In this case such precaution ought to be taken as to give the slaves proper assurance that they may without any danger to themselves declare their choice of freedom, and that it shall be done to them according to their choice.

A. If slaves in general were made free, they would soon be in a worse state than that in which they now are. Many of them know not how to contrive for themselves so as to get a living, but must soon be maintained by their former masters or some others; and others would make themselves wretched, and become a great trouble to their neighbors and an injury to the public, by their unrestrained vices. This would doubtless be the case with most of mine were they set free, and some of them are by no means able to maintain themselves.

B. I confess this objection, at first view, seems to have some weight in it; but let us examine it, and see if it be sufficient to hold so many thousands in slavery, and their children after them, to the end of the world. Would you have all the white people, who are given to hurtful vices or are unwilling or unable to maintain themselves, made slaves, and their children after them, and be bought and sold for life like cattle in the market? Would you willingly give up your own children to this, to be slaves forever to any one who should be willing and able to purchase them, if they were as vicious or helpless as you suppose many of the blacks would be if set

\* But this will give them no right to make slaves of their children, even if the parents themselves should expressly consent to it for the parent can have no right to sell the liberty of his children.

at liberty? I am sure you will not answer in the affirmative; and by answering in the negative, as I know you must, you will entirely remove the reason you have now offered for holding the blacks in this slavery, till you can show why the latter should be treated so very differently from the former, which I am confident you will not attempt.

A state of slavery has a mighty tendency to sink and contract the minds of men, and prevent their making improvements in useful knowledge of every kind. It sinks the mind down in darkness and despair; it takes off encouragements to activity and to make improvements, and naturally tends to lead the enslaved to abandon themselves to a stupid carelessness and to vices of all kinds. No wonder then the blacks among us are, many of them, so destitute of prudence and sagacity to act for themselves, and some are given to vice. It is rather a wonder there are so many instances of virtue, prudence, knowledge, and industry among them. And shall we, because we have reduced them to this abject, helpless, miserable state by our oppression of them, make this an argument for continuing them and their children in this wretched condition? God forbid! This ought rather to excite our pity, and arouse us to take some effectual method without delay to deliver them and their children from this most unhappy state. If your own children were in this situation, would you offer this as a good reason why they and their posterity should be made slaves forever? Were some of your children unable to provide for themselves through infirmity of body or want of mental capacity, and others of them were very vicious, would you have them sold into a state of slavery for this? or would you make slaves of them yourself? Would you not be willing to take the best care of them in your power, and give them all possible encouragement to behave well, and direct and assist them in proper methods to get a living? I know you would. And why will you not go and do likewise to your slaves? Why will you not take off the galling yoke from their necks, and restore them to that liberty to which they have as good a claim as you yourself and your children, and which has been violently taken from them and unjustly withheld by you to this day? If any of them are disposed to behave ill and make a bad use of their freedom, let them have all the motives to behave well that can be laid before them. Let them be subject to the same restraints and laws with other freemen, and have the same care taken of them by the public. And be as ready to direct and assist those who want discretion and assistance to get a living as if they were your own children, and as willing to support the helpless, infirm, and aged.



And give all proper encouragement and assistance to those who have served you well, and are like to get a good living, if not put under peculiar disadvantages, as freed negroes most commonly are, by giving them reasonable wages for their labor if they still continue with you, or liberally furnishing them with what is necessary in order to their living comfortably, and being in a way to provide for themselves. This was the divine command to the people of Israel, and does it not appear at least equally reasonable in the case before us? When one of their brethren had served them the number of years that were specified, they were commanded to let him go out free; and then the following injunction is added: "And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty; thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine press; of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee, thou shalt give unto him." (Deut. xv. 13, 14.)

If all who have slaves would act such a just, wise, and benevolent part towards them, and treat them in any measure as they would desire their own children and near relations should be treated, our slaves might all be set free without any detriment to themselves or the public, and their masters would be so far from losing by it that they would be abundantly rewarded for all their benevolence to these injured poor. And if our legislators would lend their helping hand, and form such laws and regulations as shall be properly suited to protect and assist those that are freed, and so as in the best manner to deter and restrain them from vicious courses, and encourage their industry and good behavior, this would be an additional security to the public against any imagined evil consequence of a general manumission of our slaves, and but a piece of justice to these poor, dependent creatures, whom we have made so by our own unrighteousness and oppression. This would encourage masters to free their slaves, and leave the objection we are now considering without the least shadow of foundation.

A. You are doubtless sensible, sir, that the legislatures in these colonies are so far from giving this encouragement to manumit our slaves, that the laws are rather a clog or hinderance to any thing of this kind, as they require the master to give security for the maintenance of his slaves if they should ever want any assistance, before he is allowed to make them free.

B. I am sorry to say there is too much truth in this. I hope our legislatures will soon attend with proper concern to this affair, and in their justice, wisdom, and goodness, enter

upon measures which shall encourage and effect a general emancipation of our slaves.

But if this should not be, I think it appears, from the course of this conversation, that this will not excuse those who have slaves from setting them at liberty, even though they should be obliged to maintain them all their days. If any slaveholder can lay his hand on his breast and sincerely say, if his children were slaves at Algiers he would not desire their master to free them unless he could do it without any risk of their ever being a charge to him, then let him still hold his slaves in bondage with a quiet conscience. Otherwise I see not how he can do it.

A. If it were granted that our slaves ought to be freed, if times and the public state of the American colonies would admit, yet in our present peculiar, calamitous, distressing state, it may be very imprudent and wrong and tend to great evil to adopt this measure. Most of the slaves in populous sea-port places have now little or no business to do, and are supported by their masters, while they earn little or nothing. And if they should be dismissed by their masters, they could not maintain themselves, and must suffer. And the attention and exertion of the public is so necessarily turned to the defence of ourselves, and this civil war introduces such calamity and confusion, that it cannot be expected, yea, it is quite impossible that there should be any proper care of the public, so as to make the provision and regulations which would be absolutely necessary in this case. Though I suggested this in the beginning of our conversation, yet I think you have paid little or no attention to it. I wish this might be well considered.

B. I think the facts you have now alleged as reasons against freeing our slaves at present, will, if duly considered, afford arguments for the very thing you are opposing. The slaves who are become unprofitable to their masters by the present calamitous state of our country, will be with the less reluctance set at liberty, it is hoped; and if no public provision be made for them that they may be transported to Africa, where they might probably live better than in any other country, or be removed into those places in this land where they may have profitable business and are wanted, now so many are called from their farms to defend our country; I say, if this be not done, the masters, by freeing them, would lose nothing by it, even though they continue to support them, till some way shall be open for them to help themselves. I must here again desire every owner of slaves to make their case his own, and consider, if he or his children were unjustly in a state of slavery, whether he should think such an objection against

their being set at liberty of any weight. Would he not rather think it reasonable that the masters who had held them in bondage against all right and reason would consider their being, by an extraordinary providence, rendered unprofitable to them, as an admonition to break off their sins by righteousness and their iniquity by showing mercy to these poor, and that it ought to be a greater satisfaction to them thus to do justice without delay and relieve these oppressed poor, than to possess all the riches, honors, and pleasures of this world? And if these masters should disregard such an admonition and neglect this opportunity to set them at liberty, putting it off to a more convenient season, would it not be very grievous to him and overwhelm him in despair of their ever doing it? Is it not very certain that they who make this objection against freeing their slaves without delay, would not free them if the times should change and they again become profitable? If they must maintain them, can they not do it as well when they are free as while they are slaves, and ought they not to do it with much more satisfaction?

And as to the public, all necessary regulations and provision might easily and very soon be made, even in our present distressing circumstances, effectually to emancipate all our slaves, were the minds of men in general properly impressed with their misery, and they sufficiently engaged to do justice and show mercy.\*

This objection might be urged with much greater show of reason by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, against freeing their servants when they were not only in a state of war, but shut up, and closely besieged in that city; yet we find it was their duty to free them immediately, as the only way to escape threatened destruction; and as soon as they had done this they had respite, and would have obtained final deliverance

\* God is so ordering it in his providence, that it seems absolutely necessary something should speedily be done with respect to the slaves among us in order to our safety and to prevent their turning against us in our present struggle, in order to get their liberty. Our oppressors have planned to gain the blacks, and induce them to take up arms against us, by promising them liberty on this condition; and this plan they are prosecuting to the utmost of their power, by which means they have persuaded numbers to join them; and should we attempt to restrain them by force and severity, keeping a strict guard over them, and punishing them severely who shall be detected in attempting to join our opposers, this will only be making bad worse, and serve to render our inconsistency, oppression, and cruelty more criminal, perspicuous, and shocking, and bring down the righteous vengeance of Heaven on our heads. The only way pointed out to prevent this threatening evil, is to set the blacks at liberty ourselves by some public acts and laws, and then give them proper encouragement to labor, or take arms in the defence of the American cause, as they shall choose. This would at once be doing them some degree of justice, and defeating our enemies in the scheme that they are prosecuting.

had they not returned to their old oppression and again brought their freed servants into bondage.

This leads me to observe, that our distresses are come upon us in such a way, and the occasion of the present war is such, as in the most clear and striking manner to point out the sin of holding our blacks in slavery, and admonish us to reform, and render us shockingly inconsistent with ourselves, and amazingly guilty if we refuse. God has raised up men to attempt to deprive us of liberty, and the evil we are threatened with is slavery. This, with our vigorous attempts to avoid it, is the ground of all our distresses, and the general voice is, "We will die in the attempt, rather than submit to slavery." But are we at the same time making slaves of many thousands of our brethren, who have as good a right to liberty as ourselves, and to whom it is as sweet as it is to us, and the contrary as dreadful? Are we holding them in the most abject, miserable state of slavery, without the least compassionate feeling towards them or their posterity, utterly refusing to take off the oppressive, galling yoke? O, the shocking, the intolerable inconsistency! And this gross, barefaced inconsistency is an open, practical condemnation of holding these our brethren in slavery; and in these circumstances the crime of persisting in it becomes unspeakably greater and more provoking in God's sight, so that all the former unrighteousness and cruelty exercised in this practice is innocence compared with the awful guilt that is now contracted. And in allusion to the words of our Savior, it may with great truth and propriety be said, "If he had not thus come in his providence, and spoken unto us, (comparatively speaking,) we had not had sin in making bondslaves of our brethren; but now, we have no cloak for our sin."

And if we continue in this evil practice and refuse to let the oppressed go free, under all this light and admonition suited to convince and reform us, and while God is evidently correcting us for it as well as for other sins, have we any reason to expect deliverance from the calamities we are under? May we not rather look for slavery and destruction like that which came upon the obstinate, unreformed Jews? In this light I think it ought to be considered by us; and viewed thus, it affords a most forcible, formidable argument not to put off liberating our slaves to a more convenient time, but to arise, all as one man, and do it with all our might, without delay, since delaying in this case is awfully dangerous as well as unspeakably criminal. This was hinted in the beginning of our conversation, you may remember, and I am glad of an opportunity to consider it more particularly.

*A.* You have repeatedly spoken of the attempt that is made to oppress and enslave the American colonies, and the calamities this has introduced, as a judgment which God has brought upon us for enslaving the Africans, and say we have no reason to expect deliverance, but still greater judgments, unless this practice be reformed. But is not this supposition inconsistent with the course of divine Providence since this war began? Have we not been strengthened and succeeded in our opposition to the measures taken against us, even beyond our most sanguine expectations; and a series of events very extraordinary and almost miraculous have taken place in our favor, and so as remarkably to disappoint our opposers and baffle them in all their plots and attempts against us? How is this consistent with the above supposition? If these calamities were brought on us for our sin in enslaving the Africans, and an expression of God's displeasure with us on that account, would he in such a signal manner appear on our side and favor, protect, and prosper us, even so that those of our enemies who are considerate and attentive have been obliged to acknowledge God was for us; I say, could this be, while we persist in that practice so offensive to him?

*B.* When I speak of our being under the divine judgments for this sin of enslaving the Africans, I do not mean to exclude other public crying sins found among us, such as impiety and profaneness, formality and indifference, in the service and cause of Christ and his religion, and the various ways of open opposition to it—intemperance and prodigality, and other instances of unrighteousness, etc., the fruits of a most criminal, contracted selfishness, which is the source of the high-handed oppression we are considering. But that this is a sin most particularly pointed out, and so contrary to our holy religion in every view of it, and such an open violation of all the laws of righteousness, humanity, and charity, and so contrary to our professions and exertions in the cause of liberty, that we have no reason to expect, nor can sincerely ask deliverance, so long as we continue in a disposition to hold fast this iniquity. If we should be delivered while we continue in this evil practice, and obstinately refuse thoroughly to execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, but go on to oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, we should, agreeably to the spirit of what you have just said, improve such deliverance as God said the Jews would have done had he delivered them while they refused to reform. “Will ye steal, murder, etc., and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?” (Jer. vii. 5–10.) Surely

this is not to be expected or desired. Even the prayer for such deliverance must be an abomination to the Lord.

But your objection is worthy of a more particular answer. It has been observed, that there has been a general resolution to suppress the slave trade in these colonies, and to import no more slaves from Africa. This is a remarkable instance of our professed regard to justice, and a wise and notable step towards a reformation of this evil, and, as has been observed, a complete reformation will be the unavoidable consequence, if we will be consistent with ourselves. For no reason can be given for suppressing the slave trade which is not equally a reason for freeing all those who have been reduced to a state of slavery by that trade; and that same regard to justice, humanity, and mercy which will induce us to acquiesce in the former, will certainly oblige us to practise the latter. Have we not, therefore, reason to think that the righteous and infinitely merciful Governor of the world has been pleased to testify his well-pleasedness with that regard to righteousness and mercy which we professed and appeared to exercise in refusing to import any more slaves, and which is an implicit condemnation of all the slavery practised among us, by appearing on our side in the remarkable, extraordinary manner you have mentioned, by which wonderful interposition in our favor he has, at the same time, given us the greatest encouragement not to stop what we have begun, but to go on to a thorough reformation, and act consistently with ourselves by breaking every yoke and doing justice to all our oppressed slaves, as well as to repent of and reform all our open, public sins? So that God is hereby showing us what he can do for us, and how happy we may be under his protection, if we will amend our ways and our doings, and loudly calling us to a thorough reformation in this most kind and winning way.

But if we obstinately refuse to reform what we have implicitly declared to be wrong, and engaged to put away the holding the Africans in slavery, which is so particularly pointed out by the evil with which we are threatened, and is such a glaring contradiction to our professed aversion to slavery and struggle for civil liberty, and improve the favor God is showing us as an argument in favor of this iniquity and encouragement to persist in it, as you, sir, have just now done, have we not the greatest reason to fear, yea, may we not with great certainty conclude, God will yet withdraw his kind protection from us, and punish us yet seven times more? This has been God's usual way of dealing with his professing people; and who can say it is not most reasonable and wise? He, then,

acts the most friendly part to these colonies and to the masters of slaves, as well as to the slaves themselves, who does his utmost to effect a general emancipation of the Africans among us; and, in this view, I could wish the conversation we have now had on this subject, if nothing better is like to be done, were published and spread through all the colonies, and had the attentive perusal of every American.

# AN ADDRESS

## TO THE OWNERS OF NEGRO SLAVES IN THE AMERICAN COLONIES.

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GENTLEMEN: Since it has been determined to publish the preceding Dialogue, it was thought proper it should be attended with a particular address to you, who are more immediately interested in the slavery there considered.

It would be injurious, it is confessed, to consider you as the only persons guilty or concerned in this matter. The several legislatures in these colonies, the magistrates, and the body of the people, have doubtless been greatly guilty in approving and encouraging, or at least conniving at, this practice;—yea, every one is in a measure guilty who has been inattentive to this oppression, and unaffected with it, and neglected to bear proper testimony against it. And it is granted the public ought to go into some effectual measures to liberate all the slaves, without laying an unreasonable burden on their masters; but though this be not done, such neglect will not excuse you in holding them in slavery, as it is in your power to set them free, and your indispensable duty, and really your interest, to do them this piece of justice, though others should neglect to assist you as they ought.

It is hoped you will not be offended with the plainness of speech used on this subject, and that though you should at first think some of the epithets and expressions which are used too severe, and find the subject itself disagreeable, this will not prevent your attentively considering it, and weighing what is offered with the utmost impartiality and readiness to receive conviction, how much soever you may find yourselves condemned; for, if your practice is here set in a true light,—in which it must appear to all impartial, judicious, good men, and in which it will appear to all at the day of judgment,—



you must be sensible you cannot too soon admit the conviction, and reform. And here it cannot be improper to remind you of your liahness to strong prejudices, which tend to prevent your seeing what in itself may be very plain. Our divine Teacher says, "*Every one* that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." If you are indeed doing evil, according to the import of the preceding dialogue, these words of Christ are so far applicable to you, and are suited to awaken your jealousy of yourselves, and lead you to attend to the subject with great concern, circumspection, and earnest prayer to the Father of lights for that discerning and wisdom by which you may, in the case depending, come to the knowledge of the truth. And is it not worthy your serious consideration that they who are not interested in this practice, and have no slaves, are generally, if not every one, fully convinced it is wrong? Are they not, at least many of them, as capable of judging in this matter as you yourselves are? and, therefore, more likely to judge right than you, as they are uninterested and impartial? The conviction of the unjustifiableness of this practice has been increasing and greatly spread of late, and many who have had slaves have found themselves so unable to justify their own conduct in holding them in bondage, as to be induced to set them at liberty. May this conviction soon reach every owner of slaves in North America.

To this end you are desired to consider what is more than once urged in the dialogue, viz., —

The very inconsistent part you act while you are thus enslaving your fellow-men, and yet condemning and strenuously opposing those who are attempting to bring you and your children into a state of bondage much lighter than that in which you keep your slaves, who yet have at least as good a right to make slaves of you and your children as you have to hold your brethren in this state of bondage. Men do not love to be inconsistent with themselves; and, therefore, this is so evident and glaring, that, if you will only suffer yourselves to reflect a moment, it must give you pain, from which you can find no relief but by freeing your slaves, or relinquishing the cause of public liberty, which you have thought so glorious, and worthy to be pursued at the risk of your fortunes and lives.

A general assembly of one of these colonies\* have expressed

\* Rhode Island. This is a preamble to a proposed act, "prohibiting the importation of negroes into this colony, and asserting the rights of freedom of all those hereafter born or manumitted within the same." It is observable, at first view, that the reason given for this act is equally a reason for actually

their conviction of this inconsistency, and given it as a reason for freeing our slaves, in the following words: "Whereas the inhabitants of America are generally engaged in the preservation of their own rights and liberties, among which that of personal freedom must be considered as the greatest, and as those who are desirous of enjoying all the advantages of liberty themselves should be willing to extend personal liberty to others: therefore, be it enacted," etc.

Is it possible that any one should not feel the irresistible force of this reason? And who would be willing to practise this glaring self-contradiction, rather than let his servants go out free, even though he should hereby give up the greatest part of his living, yea, every penny he has in the world? With what propriety will all such inconsistent oppressors be addressed by HIM before whom masters and their slaves will shortly stand as their impartial Judge—"Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant!"

Be intreated, also, seriously to consider how very offensive to God unrighteousness and the oppression of the poor, the stranger, and the fatherless is represented to be in the Holy Scripture. This is often spoken of as the procuring cause of the calamities that came on God's professing people of old, and of their final ruin. It may suffice to quote a few passages of this tenor, and refer you to places where others are to be found. "O house of David, thus saith the Lord, Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings." (Jer. xxi. 12.) "The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy; yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them." (Eze. xxii. 29-31.) "Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Israel, and for four,

freeing *all* the negro slaves in the colony without delay. As Rhode Island has been more deeply interested in the slave trade, and has enslaved more of the poor Africans, than any other colony in New England, it has been to the honor of that colony that they have lately made a law prohibiting the importation of any more slaves. How becoming, honorable, and happy would it have been had they acted up to the truth asserted in the preamble mentioned, and taken the lead of all the united colonies in effectually providing for the freedom of all their slaves!

Since the above was published, the general assembly of that State have made a law by which all the blacks born in it after March, 1781, are made free. And the masters who have slaves under forty years old are authorized to free them, without being bound, or liable to maintain them, if afterwards they should be unable to support themselves.

I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes." (Amos ii. 6.) "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken; yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts." (Zech. vii. 9-13.) See to the same purpose Isa. iii. 14, 15; x. 1-4. Jer. v. 27-29; vi. 6, 7; xxii. 13-17. Amos iv. 1, 2; v. 11, 12; viii. 4-8.

Are not the African slaves among us the poor, the strangers, the fatherless, who are oppressed and vexed, and sold for silver? And will not God visit and punish such oppression? Are you willing to be the instruments of bringing judgments and ruin on this land, and on yourselves and families, rather than let the oppressed go out free?

On the contrary, mercy, deliverance, and prosperity were often promised them, if they would leave off their oppressions and do justice and show mercy in delivering the oppressed, and showing kindness to the stranger and the poor. (Isa. i. 16-18.) "Cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." (Jer. vii. 1-7.) "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word and say, If ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if you oppress not the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place; then will I cause you to dwell in the land I gave to your fathers, forever and ever." (Jer. xxii. 3-5.) "Thus saith the Lord, Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor widow; for if ye do this thing indeed," etc. (Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16; lviii. 6, etc. Jer. v. 1.)

How can we attend to the voice of God in these sacred writings, and not see that you are most clearly pointed out? And will you be affronted, or even disregard us, while we entreat and conjure you by all that is important and sacred, so far to regard these threatenings and promises, and pursue your own highest interest and that of the public, as to let your oppressed slaves go out free? Do not say, "This is too great a sacrifice for us to make; who will indemnify us if we give up our servants?" The sovereign owner of all things has

promised you indemnity, yea, infinitely more, deliverance from the awful curse which comes upon the oppressor, and his protection and blessing. And here it may be proper to remind you of the divine answer to the king of Judah, when being ordered to dismiss the mercenaries he had procured to assist him, he asked what he should do for the hundred talents which this army had cost him? "And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." (2 Chron. xxv. 6-9.)

Consider also how very inconsistent this injustice and oppression is with worshipping God through Christ, and attending on the institutions of religion, and how unacceptable and abominable these must be while you neglect to let the oppressed go free, and refuse to do justice and love mercy. The Bible is full of declarations of this. (Isa. lviii., and ch. i. v. 10-18. Amos v. 21, 22.)

"To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." Without the former, the latter is nothing but gross hypocrisy and abomination to God; for he "will have mercy, and not sacrifice." He requires no devotion or attendance on any religious rite or institution which is inconsistent with mercy, or that is done without the love and exercise of mercy; but rejects all such prayers and service as most dishonorable and abominable to him. And when we consider that Christianity is the greatest instance and exhibition of righteousness and mercy that was ever known or can be conceived of, and the great Author of it is, in the most eminent and glorious degree, *the just God and the Savior*, we shall not wonder that no offering can be acceptable to him which is without the exercise and practice of righteousness and mercy, and that "he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy."

You who are professors of religion, and yet the owners of slaves, are entreated well to consider how you must appear in the sight of God, and of all who view your conduct in a true light, while you attend your family and public devotions, and sit down from time to time at the table of the Lord. If your neighbor wrong you of a few shillings, you think him utterly unfit to attend that sacred ordinance with you; but what is this to the wrong you are doing to your brethren, whom you are holding in slavery? Should a man at Algiers have a number of your children his slaves, and should by some means be converted and become a professor of Christianity, would you not expect he would soon set your children at liberty? And if after you had particularly dealt with him about it, and offered abundant light and matter of conviction of the

oppression and cruelty of which he was guilty, he should be deaf to all you could say, and resolve to hold them and their children in slavery, what would you think of him when you see him at his prayers, and attending at the Lord's supper? Would you think he was more acceptable to God than if he neglected these institutions, and yet had been so just and merciful as to set all his slaves at liberty? Yea, would you scruple to say his devotion and attendance on the holy supper were hypocrisy and abomination? If Nathan the prophet was here, he would say, "Thou art the man." \*

The Friends, who are commonly called Quakers, have been for a number of years bearing testimony against this oppression as inconsistent with Christianity, and striving to purge themselves of this iniquity, rejecting those from fellowship with them who will not free their slaves. They indeed do not attend the Lord's supper, and it is granted they are herein neglecting an important institution of Christ; but ought it not to alarm you to think that while you are condemning them for this neglect, your attendance, in the omission of that righteousness and mercy which they practise, is inexpressibly more dishonorable and offensive to Christ than their neglect? These things you ought first to have done, to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke, and then not leave the other undone.

May you all, in this day of your visitation, know and practise the things that belong to your peace, and the safety and happiness of the united American colonies, by no longer oppressing these poor strangers wrongfully, and doing violence to them; but by executing judgment, relieve the oppressed, and deliver the spoiled out of the hands of the oppressor. May this counsel be acceptable unto you, and you break off this your sin, and all your sins, by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to these poor, that it may be a lengthening of the tranquillity of yourselves, your families, and of this now distressed land.

\* It is granted this oppression has been practised in ignorance by many, if not the most, who have been owners of slaves; and though this has been a very criminal ignorance, yet professors of religion and real Christians may have lived in this sin through ignorance, consistent with sincerity, and so as to be acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, in their devotions, etc. But though God has in time past suffered us, ignorantly, to walk in this wicked way, he is now using special means to open our eyes, and commands all every where to repent of his iniquity. And they who persist in this sin in opposition to the clear light and alarming admonitions which are now set before us, will greatly aggravate their own guilt if they do not hereby give just reason to suspect the sincerity of their profession. Some who are in the Scriptures declared to be good men, lived in evil practices, consistent with sincerity in their attendance on divine institutions; in which practices no Christian can now live consistent with his Christian character, because we enjoy much greater light than they had, and these evil ways are more fully exposed and condemned.

A DISCOURSE  
UPON THE  
SLAVE TRADE  
AND THE  
SLAVERY OF THE AFRICANS.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE  
PROVIDENCE SOCIETY FOR ABOLISHING THE SLAVE TRADE, ETC.

AT THEIR ANNUAL MEETING, MAY 17, 1793.

TO  
THE PROVIDENCE SOCIETY  
FOR  
ABOLISHING THE SLAVE TRADE, ETC.,  
THE FOLLOWING  
DISCOURSE  
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED  
BY  
THE AUTHOR.

A

## DISCOURSE

UPON

# THE SLAVE TRADE, ETC.

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THE members of this respectable society, by whom I have been invited to deliver a discourse before them, at this their annual meeting, on the slave trade, and the consequent slavery of the Africans, and all those who are present on this occasion will not expect that any thing new will be said on a subject which has been so much canvassed of late, and on which so many have written and so fully exposed the unparalleled unrighteousness, inhumanity, and cruelty, and the odious and horrible attendants of it, by which great light has been thrown upon it, and the attention of millions turned to it, and they have been led to execrate it as a most shocking, outrageous violation of all the rights of man. And there are none, or very few now, except those whose minds are blinded, and their hearts hardened by custom and their supposed interest, who do not condemn it, as contrary to the true and best interest of society, and, therefore, think all lawful endeavors ought to be exerted to suppress and abolish it forever.

But as it is not easy fully to explore this business, and comprehend it in all its length and breadth, and realize all the evils included in it, it is highly proper and important often to renew our meditations upon it, and to take those methods which are suited to impress our minds and the minds of others more and more with the iniquity of this practice, viewed in every different light, and in all the evil consequences of it.

In this view, and to promote such a design, the attention, patience, and candor of this respectable audience are asked to the following observations, which shall be introduced by some of the last words of the benevolent Redeemer of man,—who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save,—which he spake to his disciples when he was about to leave the world and ascend to



heaven,—recorded by the evangelist Mark, 16th chapter and 15th verse of his gospel,—

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

This direction and command is an expression of the greatest benevolence to man. When the Son of God had become incarnate and taken upon him the form of a servant, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, in order to make atonement for the sins of men, and bring in everlasting righteousness that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, and had risen from the dead, he ordered that this good news should be published through the whole world, and the offer of this salvation be made to all mankind, of whatever nation or complexion, whether Jews or Gentiles, the more civilized or barbarians, rich or poor, white or black; this being the only remedy for lost man, suited to recover him from that state of darkness, sin, and misery in which the world of mankind lay and must perish forever, were it not for this salvation. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby they can be saved.”

And, as this is an infinitely kind and benevolent injunction, it points out and commands a duty, an employment, which must be most agreeable and pleasing to every benevolent mind, whatever labor and expense it may require. And they may reasonably think themselves highly favored and honored to whom ability and opportunity are given to preach the gospel, the unsearchable riches of Christ, to any of their fellow-men; or who are under advantage to promote this design, by any exertion in their power.

As the gospel affords the only relief for fallen man, so it is a sufficient and complete one, where the spirit of it is cordially imbibed and it is properly improved for the purposes which it is suited to promote. It raises sinners from the greatest moral depravity, guilt, and misery, to a state of light, pardon, and peace, and brings them finally to the enjoyment of complete and endless felicity.

This institution of Heaven, when properly attended to, understood, and cordially embraced, turns men from darkness to marvellous light. If it finds them in a state of savage ignorance and barbarity it civilizes them, and forms them to be intelligent and good members of society. It subdues the selfishness, pride, and worldly-mindedness of men, and all their inordinate lusts, and “teaches them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” It raises the mind to the sight and

contemplation of the most sublime, important, and entertaining objects, and manifests those truths, and gives that light, which are received with pleasing love and admiration; which make men truly wise, and animate them to the practice of every personal, social, and religious duty. It forms men to uprightness and the practice of righteousness, to universal benevolence and goodness; teaching them to love their neighbor as themselves, and to do to other men as they would that others should do unto them. So far as it spreads and has influence on the hearts and lives of men, it banishes the manifold evils under which mankind have groaned in all ages, and introduces peace, love, and harmony among men, and unites them together into a happy society, in which every one puts on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness and long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving each other in love; each one studying and exerting himself to do good to all men, according to his ability and opportunity. At the same time, it forms men to the most sincere, uniform, and rational piety, in the exercise of love to God and the Redeemer, and to all his friends and servants; and they have joy and peace in believing and serving Jesus Christ, and their hope of eternal life in the kingdom of Christ is built and flourishes on the best and most sure foundation.

This command of Christ, to preach the gospel to all the nations in the world, respects not only the apostles and disciples who then heard him speak, and the ministers of the gospel in general who have since been, or are now, or shall be, appointed to that work, but is extended to all Christians, in every age of the church, requiring them in all proper ways, according to their ability, stations, and opportunities, to promote this benevolent design, and exert themselves for the furtherance of the gospel, that, if possible, all may hear and share in the happy effects of it. They who are not called to be preachers of the gospel may, in many ways, assist those who are sent forth to this work, and do much to forward the propagation and spreading of Christianity; not only helping by their prayers, but by liberal contributions of their substance, and by many other labors and exertions. Every true disciple of Christ who understands the gospel, and prizes it above silver and gold, and whose heart is expanded with love to Christ and benevolence to his fellow-men, must not only wish and pray that all nations may enjoy the blessings of it, and come to the knowledge of this saving truth, but considers it as an unspeakable privilege to be in any way, and in the least degree, an instrument of promoting this design, whatever labor and expense it may require. And it is owing to the great

and inexcusable wickedness of men that the gospel did not soon spread all over the world after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and was not embraced by all men from that day down to this time; which would have prevented the many and dreadful evils which have reigned in the world in all this period, and introduced a glorious scene and series of happy events, which exceed our present conception. Therefore, it can be attributed to nothing but the depravity of mankind that the command of the Savior has not been obeyed, and all men have not been made to share in the saving blessings of the gospel, but that it has been, and still is, so unsuccessful in the world.

Would we know the nature and excellence of Christianity, and the happy tendency of it to promote the good of mankind, both temporal and eternal, we must not expect to learn it from the general appearance of it in what is called the Christian part of the world, and the effect it now has on the greatest part of those who enjoy the light of it; but we must look into our Bibles, where it is properly and to the best advantage described, and all the doctrines and precepts which it contains are plainly written by the pen of inspiration; and there we are taught the effect it had on those who cordially embraced the gospel in the days of the apostles, and to what an excellent character it formed those who became true Christians; and we are informed by credible historians what a happy effect it had in the world where it spread and was embraced for the first two or three centuries after the ascension of Christ, until the administration of it was perverted by wicked men, who, with all their worldliness and pride, crept into the church, and perverted Christianity in its very nature and design, both in doctrine and practice, to accommodate it to their selfishness and pride, and so as to answer their own worldly ends. And there have been numbers who in all ages since, in the midst of the general apostasy and corruption, have held fast the form of sound doctrine contained in divine revelation, and in their life and practice have been the humble, harmless followers of Christ, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they have shone as lights in the world, exhibiting an amiable example of faith, patience, righteousness, and benevolence, of which excellent character, we trust, there is a number now in the Christian world, and among us.

Among many other evil things which have prevailed in this apostate world are tyranny and slavery, introduced and practised by the lusts, the selfishness, pride, and avarice of men, which have been the source of unspeakable unhappiness and misery. The gospel is suited to root these evils out of the

world, and wholly abolish slavery; and will have this effect where it is fully and faithfully preached, and cordially received and obeyed. For where this takes place, no one will forfeit his liberty, and, therefore, must have a right to it; and no man will make a slave of another, were it in his power, who has not forfeited his liberty by the sentence of proper judges; for in so doing, he would act contrary to the precepts of Christianity.

The following precept of our Lord and Savior, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them," which is included in loving our neighbor as ourselves, will set at liberty every slave who has not forfeited his freedom, or to whom slavery can be considered as undesirable and a calamity, whenever it is properly regarded and reduced to practice.

Christianity being, in the nature and tendency of it, and the particular precepts which it contains, thus opposed to slavery, did gradually, even in its most corrupt state, root it out among the nations in the Christian world, so that it was almost, if not wholly, abolished for some centuries, until it took place again, in a manner and degree which was never known before among any nation or people since the world began, in the abominable slave trade with the Africans, and their consequent slavery. That this business, which is such a gross and open violation not only of the genius and precepts of Christianity, but of the rights and feelings of humanity, should be undertaken and carried on by nations who call themselves Christians, and by individuals who bear that name, is truly astonishing. It is impossible fully to describe, or to have an adequate conception of, the crimes which have been committed in this business, or the evils which have attended it. If a man of observation, discernment, and humanity had attended this trade many years, and spent the residue of his life in the West Indies, under the best advantage to see the inhumanity and cruelty, and the various crimes, which take place in the treatment of the slaves, and the innumerable miseries which they suffer, he would, after all, have but a very partial idea and conception of the whole, and know but little, compared with all of this kind which takes place. How low and faint, then, are our conceptions of this enormous evil! The great Omnipotent alone, who will bring every work of man into judgment, with every secret thing, has a full, clear, and perfect knowledge of the whole of this great evil.

Suffice it now, in a few words, to say, that, by this trade in the bodies and souls of men, millions have been violently torn from their native country and from every thing dear to them; in the accomplishment of which, fire and sword, war and deso-

lation, and slaughter of numbers exceeding our reckoning have taken place through a vast extent of country, and multitudes have been induced to betray, steal, and sell their countrymen and neighbors. Many thousands of these, thus taken from their country and all the enjoyments of life and liberty, and all their dearest connections, have died on board the ships, in their passage to the West Indies or to other countries, and the rest have been sold, like brute beasts, into perpetual slavery, with their posterity after them, where the most of them are treated in a manner beyond description inhuman and cruel, by owners, masters, and overseers, many, if not the most, of whom are hardened against all the feelings of humanity towards their slaves, and are themselves a nuisance and burden to the earth; so that the West India islands, in general, are become the greatest resemblance of the infernal regions that can be found in this world.

In this general, but very superficial and scanty view of the slave trade and the slavery connected with it, who can forbear pronouncing that they who have encouraged, prosecuted, or supported this traffic in their fellow-men, — though some of them may have done it in ignorance and unbelief, — have really been the emissaries of Satan, and agents for him who delights in the wickedness and misery of mankind? And though they live in Christian lands, and call themselves Christians, and whatever plausible pretences they may make, they have all been really acting most contrary to the nature and precepts of Christianity, and doing the works of the devil; and nothing can be more dishonorable to the gospel and the Author of it than to attempt to reconcile this practice with Christianity.

This, indeed, has been attempted by some; and, among other things, it has been pretended that this treatment of the Africans was right and commendable, as it was the way to Christianize them, by bringing them from a heathen to a Christian land. But is this obedience to the command of the Savior — “Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”? Is it not directly contrary to this command? Does this direct men to go into heathen lands and take men by force from their own country, and destroy a great part of them, and reduce the rest to the most abject slavery, in order to make Christians of them? Does it not rather command us to carry the gospel to them, and to take all proper pains, in the most friendly manner, to instruct and persuade them to embrace it, without any force or compulsion, that they may be happy in their own land while they live, and be saved from sin and misery forever? Do the dealers in slaves make

any attempts to carry the gospel to Africa and propagate it there? Do they say a word to their slaves about the gospel, or do any thing that tends to lead them to embrace it? Has not their whole conduct, in their treatment of the Africans, a direct and strong tendency to the contrary? The slave trade, in the manner in which it has been carried on, tends to beget the strongest prejudices against Christianity in the inhabitants of the vast continent of Africa, and actually has done it in many nations; and nothing could have been done by those who bear the name of Christians more effectually to prevent the introduction of the gospel into that part of the world, and more directly to counteract the command of Christ to preach the gospel to them. And how do those who are brought from that country, and put into a state of slavery, and treated as the slaves generally are in the West Indies, naturally and unavoidably look upon these dealers in slaves, who are called *Christians*? Is it possible they should look upon them in a better light than we do the savages, not to say the inhabitants of the infernal regions? What, then, must they think of Christianity? Is this the way to persuade them to be Christians? What could be done more to prevent it? Many millions of these poor creatures have doubtless lived and died with the greatest aversion to Christianity, and even the name of a Christian, from the treatment they have received from those who have called themselves Christians. And if any have embraced the gospel and become real Christians, in circumstances tending so strongly to prejudice against it, this must be ascribed to the extraordinary, wonderful, and no less than miraculous interposition of divine power and grace; and no thanks are due to the dealers in slaves, whose whole conduct has been counteracted in these instances. And can it be believed that these dealers in slaves have carried on this unchristian, inhuman, and cruel business with a view to Christianize those whom they thus injure and oppress, or from any motives of benevolence or humanity? This seems impossible. But if this were possible, the treatment of these slaves demonstrates that no such motives exist while no proper methods are taken to instruct them in Christianity; and, in most instances, there has been not only no care taken to instruct them, but constant care and exertions to prevent it, added to the prejudices against Christianity which have been mentioned. And there is no reason to consider those many millions of slaves, who have been made so by this trade, as under any better advantages for instruction, or to become Christians, than if they had lived and died in their own country, a few instances only excepted. No; this business has

been begun and carried on from that sordid selfishness and avarice which fortify men's hearts against the truths and precepts of the gospel, and will lead them to do the work of the evil one, in order to get money and promote what they consider to be their worldly interest.

Had all those who have had a hand in this anti-Christian business, by which so many millions of our fellow-men have been murdered or treated as brutes, or both, been disposed to take as much pains, and be at as great cost to send the gospel to Africa and instruct and Christianize the many nations in that part of the world, as they have taken and expended to enslave and destroy them, and thus prejudice them against Christianity, they would probably have been the means of spreading the gospel over that vast continent, of civilizing those barbarous nations, and of the salvation of millions, and would have prevented the destruction and misery of which they have been the occasion and instruments, and would have had the reward of such a benevolent work, and escaped the guilt which now lies upon them and the awful consequence.

This observation opens a scene to our view which is enough to overwhelm the attentive, pious mind, and must, therefore, be now only mentioned. A future judgment, an eternity to come, will unfold the whole, of which we can now have but a transient glimpse.

This enormous iniquity and wide-spreading evil — the slave trade, with its consequences, which has been carried on and advanced to such a degree for more than a century by kings and their people in the Christian world — is an evidence, among many others, and serves to confirm the opinion, that the sixth vial, mentioned in the sixteenth chapter of the Revelation, has been running during this time. It is there predicted, that under this vial three unclean spirits, the spirits of devils, working miracles or wonderful things, should go forth to the whole world, to gather them together to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

The work of these spirits is to excite men, especially in the Christian world, to extraordinary and wonderful degrees of wickedness, by which they unite in arming themselves against Heaven, and are prepared for the judgments which will follow. Who can attend to the slave trade, in the manner in which it has been prosecuted, with the extent and consequences of it, and not be convinced that the hand and power of Satan has been in an extraordinary degree exerted and manifested in it, stirring men up to a kind and degree of wickedness and mischief which was not known before?

And shall this shameful practice, this evil, which has got

such deep root, and is spread so far and wide, never have an end? Can no stop be put to those wicked men who are devouring their fellow-men who are more righteous than they? Must this gross and open violation of the rights of man, of the laws of God, and the benevolent religion of the Savior continue forever? Shall the horrid scene of unrighteousness, violence, cruelty, and misery, which has so long taken place in the West Indies and Africa, never be abolished?

Thanks be to God! He has assured us that all these works of the devil shall be destroyed, and that the time is hastening on, when all the people shall be righteous and benevolent, and there shall be none to destroy or hurt in all the earth; and what has taken place of late, gives reason of hope and confidence that this sore evil will soon be made to cease. The attention of thousands and millions has been awakened and turned to this subject; much has been written upon it, and light and conviction have had a rapid and extensive circulation. Numerous societies have been voluntarily formed wholly to abolish this evil; and there is reason to conclude that this light and conviction, and these exertions, will continue and increase till the slave traders shall be utterly destroyed.

But why is this work still opposed or neglected by any? Why are not the cries of the millions of Africans in bondage heard by all? Why do they make no more impression on the public mind, and rouse all to feel for the wretchedness of so great a part of their fellow-men, and to exertions for their relief? Why is the British Parliament so slow to abolish the slave trade, and no more influenced by the evidence laid before them of the cruelties and murders which attend this traffic, and of the moral and political evils produced by it, and by the repeated, earnest, and powerful applications made to them?

And as to some of us Americans, what shall we say? We have reason to reflect with painful shame upon the hand we have had in this iniquity, by which so many thousands of our fellow-men, as good by nature as we are, have been destroyed, or put into a state of the most abject slavery, in the West Indies, or brought to this continent and sold like cattle, and, in most instances, treated as if they were not men.

In the year 1774, when Britain appeared to threaten a war with us, and was disposed to deny to us some part of the liberty which we claimed, and we had a prospect of entering into a bloody contest in defence of our own rights, the slave trade, which had been practised by us, appeared so inconsistent with our contending for our own liberty, that a Congress, which then represented these now United States, made a solemn resolution, in the name of all the people whom they repre-



sented, in the following words: "We will neither import, nor purchase any slaves imported, after the first day of December next; after which time we will wholly discontinue the slave trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our vessels, or sell our commodities or manufactures, to those who are concerned in it." And all the people appeared to acquiesce in this resolution, as reasonable, important, and necessary, in order to act a consistent part while contending for their own liberties, and to have any ground of hope in the protection and smiles of a righteous God, and success in the struggle into which we were entering. With this resolution we entered the combat, and God appeared to be on our side, and wrought wonders in our favor, disappointed those who rose up against us, and established us a free and independent nation.

After all this, could it have been expected, would it have been believed, if predicted, that such a resolution, so reasonable and important, on which the hope of success was in a great measure grounded, and which was doubtless one means of it, should be so far forgotten and counteracted that a convention, met to form a constitution, could not agree upon one, unless it did secure the continuance of the importation of slaves, for a number of years at least?—that the Congress of the United States should so long neglect to suppress this trade, so far as it is acknowledged they have authority to do it, through the opposition made to such a measure by a small minority?—that notwithstanding laws have been made by a number of these states, prohibiting this trade in human flesh, it is yet carried on openly, (*horresco referens*.) especially in this state, and yet the law be eluded, and cannot be executed?—that there are hundreds of thousands of slaves in these states, and no effectual measures are taken, where the most of them are, to give them a proper education and emancipate them, as soon as it may be done consistent with their best good and that of the public?

When all this is taken into view by the truly pious, who fear God and believe his word, is it to be wondered at that their flesh trembleth for fear of the righteous judgments of God? Are they to be condemned as superstitious enthusiasts? Have we not all reason to fear that the vengeance of Heaven will fall upon us, as a people, in ways perhaps which are not now thought of, unless we repent and reform?

But may we not hope for better things?—that this evil practice will be better investigated, and soon utterly suppressed?—that benevolence and compassion towards the miserable Africans will be so sensibly, and with such strength,

exercised towards them by the people in general, that all proper measures will be taken to make them a free and happy people? And if it be necessary, in order to this, that they should return to Africa, — the continent which seems to be best suited to their constitution, — may we not wish and hope that such a desire to compensate them, as far as we may, for the injuries we have done them, and such a spirit of benevolence will be excited, that we shall with cheerfulness contribute every thing necessary to answer this end?

We may hope that all this dark and dreadful scene will not only have an end, but is designed by the Most High to be the means of introducing the gospel among the nations in Africa; that those who have embraced the gospel while among us, with all who have been, or may be, in some good measure civilized and instructed, will, by our assistance, return to Africa, and spread the light of the gospel in that now dark part of the world, and propagate those arts, and that science, which shall recover them from that ignorance and barbarity which now prevail, to be a civilized, Christian, and happy people, making as great improvement in all useful knowledge, and in the practice of righteousness, benevolence, and piety, as has yet been done by any people on earth, and much greater. Thus all this past and present evil which the Africans have suffered by the slave trade, and the slavery to which so many of them have been reduced, may be the occasion of an over-balancing good; and it may hereafter appear, as it has in the case of Joseph being sold a slave into Egypt, and the oppression and slavery of the Israelites by the Egyptians, that though the slave traders have really meant and done that which is evil, yet God has designed it all for good, the good of which all this evil shall be the occasion.

Ought not this prospect to animate us earnestly to pray for such a happy event, and to exert ourselves to the utmost to promote it? Can we be indifferent and negligent in this matter, without slighting and disobeying the command of Christ, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? And will not such an attempt to send the gospel to Africa, being willing to spare no expense or labor thus to spread the knowledge of the Savior among the nations there, be a proper expression of our love and regard to this benevolent, important injunction?

To this end, let us be firm, wise, and active in pursuing every proper measure to abolish the slave trade and put an end to the slavery of the Africans, which is so contrary to the gospel, and has opposed and is now a hinderance to the propa-

gation of it in Africa, and is so injurious to the spiritual and temporal interest of all who have any connection with it.

May none of this respectable society, from selfish and sinister views, or from fear of man, or partial favor and affection to any, or from indolence and neglect, act a part inconsistent with the benevolent design of it, or unworthy of a member of it; but may every one, with the utmost care, circumspection, fidelity, and fortitude, act a consistent part, and persevere in constant endeavors to promote the important end of this institution, whatever may be the opposition from ignorant, interested men, knowing that he is engaged in the cause of God and human nature.

Let us consult and determine what we may do in favor of the blacks among us, especially those who are free, in protecting them from oppression and injuries, by encouraging and assisting them to industry and a prudent management of their worldly affairs, attempting to reform the vicious, to instruct the ignorant, and promote morality, virtue, and religion among them, and providing for the education of their children in useful learning, that they may be raised to an acknowledged equality with the white people, and some of them, of the most promising abilities and piety, be fitted to preach the gospel to their brethren in Africa, and that numbers may be the better prepared to move to that region, and settle there, and set an example of industry and wisdom in cultivating the land of that fertile country, and of the practice of Christianity, which will have the best tendency to civilize those now barbarous nations, to spread the light of the gospel among them, and persuade them to be Christians.

Is there not good reason to believe, that if this nation, the inhabitants in the United States of America, both high and low, rulers and ruled, had a proper view and sense of the unrighteousness of the slave trade and the slavery of the Africans, and of the sore calamity and misery of millions of our fellow-men in Africa, the West Indies, and on this continent, as the effect of this iniquity, not only a stop would be put to this trade, and all the slaves among us be set free as fast as possible, but such strong compassion would be excited towards these injured, miserable men, and desire and zeal to make all possible compensation to them, and render them happy, that no exertions or expense would be thought too much which would be required to transport those to Africa who should be disposed to go and settle there, and to furnish them with every thing necessary and convenient for their being settled there in the best circumstances suited to promote

their temporal and eternal happiness, and of the nations on that vast continent? How happy, if we, as a people and nation, should cheerfully unite in this from motives of justice and benevolence, and a desire that the gospel may be preached to every creature! How unhappy, if we should be forced to part with the slaves in these states, and send them away, from the motives of fear and distress which induced the Egyptians to part with their dearest treasures in order to thrust out and send the Israelites from them, whom they had injured and abused! It is very possible that one of these may take place.

If the former, and we should cheerfully agree to do this injured people all the justice and show them all the kindness in our power, we should not only take the most probable method to avert the divine judgments and obtain the smiles of Heaven, and take, perhaps, the best method in our reach to promote the propagation of the gospel, but we, especially some of the southern states in the Union, would be delivered from the sin and calamity of the slavery which now takes place, which is a great moral and political evil, however insensible they may now be of it. And such a settlement in Africa, properly conducted and supported, might be greatly beneficial to the commercial interest both of this nation and of those in Africa, and, in the end, produce a temporal good and prosperity, which might, as far as is now practicable, atone for the evils of the slave trade and slavery.

But, be this as it may, we may be assured that we are engaged in a cause which will finally prosper. The slave trade, and all slavery, shall be totally abolished, and the gospel shall be preached to all nations; good shall be brought out of all the evil which takes place, and all men shall be united into one family and kingdom under Christ the Savior; and the meek shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace. In the prospect of this we may rejoice in the midst of the darkness and evils which now surround us, and think ourselves happy if we may be, in any way, the active instruments of hastening on this desirable predicted event. Amen.

## APPENDIX.

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THE proposal of assisting the blacks among us to go and make a settlement in Africa, which has been mentioned in the preceding discourse, I have thought to be of such importance as to require a more particular explanation to be laid before the public, with the reasons for it, for their consideration; hoping that, if it be generally approved, it will excite those united, generous exertions which are necessary in order to effect it.

There are a considerable number of free blacks in New England and in other parts of the United States, some of whom are industrious and of a good moral character, and some of them appear to be truly pious, who are desirous to remove to Africa and settle there. They who are religious would be glad to unite as Christian brethren, and move to Africa, having one instructor or more, and cultivate the land which they may obtain there, and maintain the practice of Christianity in the sight of their now heathen brethren, and endeavor to instruct and civilize them, and spread the knowledge of the gospel among them.

In order to effect this in the best manner, a vessel must be procured, and proper sailors provided to go to Africa, with a number of persons, both white and black, perhaps, who shall be thought equal to the business, to search that country, and find a place where a settlement may be made with the consent of the inhabitants there; the land being given by them, or purchased of them, and so as best to answer the ends proposed. If such a place can be found, as no doubt it may, they must return, and the blacks must be collected who are willing to go and settle there, and form themselves into a civil society, by agreeing in a constitution and a code of laws, by which they will be regulated.

And they must be furnished with every thing necessary and proper to transport and settle them there in a safe and comfortable manner; with shipping and provisions, till they can procure them in Africa by their own labor; and with instruments and utensils necessary to cultivate the land, build houses, etc., and have all the protection and assistance they will need, while settling and when settled there. And, if necessary, a number of white people must go with them; one or more to superintend their affairs, and others to survey and lay out their lands, build mills and houses, etc. But these must not think of settling there for life; and the blacks are to be left to themselves when they shall be able to conduct their own affairs, and need no further assistance, and be left a free, independent people.

This appears to be the best and only plan to put the blacks among us in the most agreeable situation for themselves, and to render them most useful to their brethren in Africa, by civilizing them, and teaching them how to cultivate their lands, and spreading the knowledge of the Christian religion among them. The whites are so habituated, by education and custom, to look upon and treat the blacks as an inferior class of beings, and they are sunk so low by their situation and the treatment they receive from us, that

they never can be raised to an equality with the whites, and enjoy all the liberty and rights to which they have a just claim; or have all the encouragements and motives to make improvements of every kind, which are desirable. But if they were removed to Africa this evil would cease, and they would enjoy all desirable equality and liberty, and live in a climate which is peculiarly suited to their constitution. And they would be under advantages to set an example of industry, and the best manner of cultivating the land, of civil life, of morality and religion, which would tend to gain the attention of the inhabitants of that country, and persuade them to receive instruction and embrace the gospel.

These United States are able to be at the expense of prosecuting such a plan, of which these hints are some of the outlines. And is not this the best way that can be taken to compensate the blacks, both in America and Africa, for the injuries they have received by the slave trade and slavery, and that which righteousness and benevolence must dictate? And even selfishness will be pleased with such a plan as this, and excite to exertions to carry it into effect, when the advantages of it to the public and to individuals are well considered and realized. This will gradually draw off all the blacks in New England, and even in the Middle and Southern States, as fast as they can be set free, by which this nation will be delivered from that which, in the view of every discerning man, is a great calamity, and inconsistent with the good of society, and is now really a great injury to most of the white inhabitants, especially in the Southern States.

And by the increase and flourishing of such a plantation of free people in Africa, where all the tropical fruits and productions and the articles which we fetch from the West Indies may be raised in great abundance, by proper cultivation, and many other useful things procured, a commerce may take place and be maintained between those settlements and the United States of America, which will be of very great and increasing advantage to both.

And this will have the greatest tendency wholly to abolish the abominable trade in human flesh, and will certainly effect it, if all other attempts prove unsuccessful.

That such a plan is practicable, is evident from the experiment which has lately been made in forming a settlement of blacks at Sierra Leone. Above a thousand blacks were transported from Nova Scotia to that place last year, who, by the assistance of a small number of whites and supplies from England, have formed a town and plantation, which, by the latest accounts, is now in a flourishing condition, the inhabitants living in peace and amity with the neighboring nations, and with a promising prospect of being a great advantage to them, by teaching them to cultivate their lands and civilizing them, and showing them the advantages of peace and of industry, and trade in the productions of their country, and spreading the knowledge of Christianity among them. This will gradually put an end to the slave trade and to slavery in that part of the continent. And from this settlement there is a rational prospect of a commerce in the productions of that climate with Britain, which will be so profitable as more than to compensate the latter for all the expense of forming and carrying it on, and will be greatly advantageous to both nations.

There is reason to believe that a settlement may be made by the blacks now in the United States in some part of Africa, either on the River Sierra Leone or in some other place, which will be as advantageous to those who shall settle there and to the adjacent nations as this which has been mentioned, and with much less expense, and which will be a greater benefit to this nation than that may be to Britain.

Are there not, then, motives sufficient to induce the legislature of this nation to enter upon and prosecute this design, to form a plan and execute it, as wisdom shall direct? And is there not reason to think that it would meet

with general approbation? But, if this cannot be, may not this be effected by the societies in these states who are formed with a design to promote the best good of the Africans? Would not this be answering the end of their institution in the best way that can be devised, and in imitation of that which has been formed in Great Britain for the same purpose?

Is there not reason to believe that, if such a plan was well digested and properly laid before the public, and urged, with the reasons which offer, and a company or committee formed to conduct the affair, there might be a sum collected sufficient to carry it into effect?

The general court in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts did, some time ago, make a resolve to the following purpose: That when a place can be found in Africa where the blacks in that state may settle to their advantage, they would furnish them with shipping and provisions sufficient to transport them there, and with arms sufficient to defend them, and farming utensils sufficient to cultivate their lands. If all the states in the Union, or most of them, would take the same measure, such a design might be soon and easily carried into execution. Nothing appears to be wanting but a proper, most reasonable zeal in so good a cause.

## THE SLAVE TRADE AND SLAVERY.\*

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WHEN the public or any part of the community are taking those measures, or going into that practice, which may issue in ruin, and most certainly will, unless reformed, he who foresees the approaching evil cannot act a benevolent or faithful part unless he gives warning of the danger, and does his utmost to reform and save his fellow-citizens, even though he should hereby incur the displeasure and resentment of a number of individuals. In this view, Crito asks the candid attention of the public to what he has to say on the following interesting and important subject.

Some, perhaps, will not choose to read any further, but drop this paper with a degree of uneasy disgust, when they are told the subject to which their attention is asked is the African slave trade, which has been practised, and in which numbers in these United States are now actually engaged. So much has been published within a few years past on this subject, describing the fertile country of Africa, and the ease and happiness which the natives of that land enjoy, and might enjoy to a much greater degree, were it not for their own ignorance and folly, and the unhappy influence which the Europeans and Americans have had among them, inducing them to make war upon each other, and by various methods to captivate and kidnap their brethren and neighbors, and sell them into the most abject and perpetual slavery, — and at the same time giving a well-authenticated history of this commerce in the human species, pointing out the injustice, inhumanity, and barbarous cruelty of this trade, from beginning to end, until the poor Africans are fixed in a state of the most cruel bondage, in which, without hope, they linger out a wretched life, and then leave their posterity, if they are so unhappy as to have any, in the same miserable state, — so much has been lately published, I say, on these subjects, that it is needless particularly to discuss them here. It is sufficient to refer the inquisitive to

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the following books, viz., several Tracts, collected and published by the late Anthony Benezet, of Philadelphia; "A Dialogue concerning the Slavery of the Africans," lately reprinted at New York by order of the society there for promoting the manumission of slaves, and protecting such of them as have been, or may be, liberated; and especially "An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, particularly the Africans," by Thomas Clarkson, which was honored with the first prize in the University of Cambridge for the year 1785. If the African slave trade, and the consequent slavery of the negroes in the West Indies and in the United States of America, be an open and gross violation of the rights of mankind, a most unrighteous, inhuman, and cruel practice, which has been the occasion of the death of millions, and of violently forcing millions of others from their dear, native country, and their most tender and desirable connections, and of bringing them to a land of slavery, where they have not a friend to pity and relieve them, but are doomed to cruel bondage, without hope of redress, till kind death shall release them, as is represented, and seems to be abundantly proved, in the above-mentioned publications and many others, a conviction of which is fast spreading among all ranks of men in Europe and America, then the following terrible consequence, which may well make all shudder and tremble who realize it, forces itself upon us, viz., all who have had any hand in this iniquitous business, whether more directly or indirectly, have used their influence to promote it, or have consented to it, or even connived at it, and have not opposed it by all proper exertions of which they have been capable,—all these are, in a greater or less degree, chargeable with the injuries and miseries which millions have suffered, and are suffering, in consequence of this trade, and are guilty of the blood of millions who have lost their lives by this traffic of the human species. Not only the merchants who have been engaged in this trade, and for the sake of gain have sacrificed the liberty and happiness, yea, the lives of millions of their fellow-men, and the captains and men who have been tempted by the love of money to engage in this cruel work, to buy, and sell, and butcher men, and the slaveholders of every description, are guilty of shedding rivers of blood, but all the legislatures who have authorized, encouraged, or even neglected to suppress it to the utmost of their power, and all the individuals in private stations who have in any way aided in this business, consented to it, or have not opposed it to the utmost of their ability, have a share in this guilt. It is, therefore, become a national sin, and a sin of the first magnitude—a sin which righteous Heaven has never suf-

ferred to pass unpunished in this world. For the truth of this assertion we may appeal to history, both sacred and profane.

We will leave the inhabitants of Britain and other European nations who have been, and still are, engaged in the slave trade, to answer for themselves, and consider this subject as it more immediately concerns the United States of America.

Hundreds of thousands of slaves have been imported into these states, many thousands are now in slavery here, and many more thousands have been brought from Africa by the inhabitants of these states, and sold in the West Indies, where slavery is attended with cruelty and horror beyond description. And who can reckon up the numbers who have lost their lives and been really murdered by this trade, or have a full conception of the sufferings and distresses of body and mind which have been the attendants and effects of it? All this blood which has been shed constantly cries to Heaven; and all the bitter sighs, and groans, and tears of these injured, distressed, helpless poor have entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts, and are calling and waiting for the day of vengeance. The inhabitants of Rhode Island, especially those of Newport, have had by far the greater share in this traffic of all these United States. This trade in the human species has been the first wheel of commerce in Newport, on which every other movement in business has chiefly depended. That town has been built up, and flourished in times past, at the expense of the blood, the liberty, and happiness of the poor Africans; and the inhabitants have lived on this, and by it have gotten most of their wealth and riches. If a bitter *woe* is pronounced on "him who buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong," (Jer. xxii. 13,) "to him who buildeth a town by blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity," (Hab. ii. 12,) "to the *bloody city*," (Ezek. xxiv. 6,) what a heavy, dreadful *woe* hangs over the heads of all those whose hands are defiled by the blood of the Africans, especially the inhabitants of that state, and of that town, who have had a distinguished share in this unrighteous, bloody commerce! All this and more follows as a necessary consequence, which it is presumed none will dispute, on supposition the before-mentioned publications give, in any measure, a just representation of the slave trade and the consequent slavery of the Africans, and unless thousands and millions of all ranks, and of the most disinterested, and many of them men of the best, abilities and character for knowledge, uprightness, and benevolence, and who are under the greatest advantages to know the truth and judge right of this matter, both in Europe and America,—unless *all those* are grossly deluded.

But if all these may be fairly confuted, and the African slave trade, and the consequent treatment of those who are by means of this reduced to slavery, can be justified, and shown to be consistent with justice, humanity, and universal benevolence, then the whole of this consequence will be obviated, and all the supposed guilt of injuring our fellow-men in the highest degree, and of shedding rivers of innocent blood, will be wiped away as a mere phantom, and vanish as the baseless fabric of a night vision. It is earnestly to be desired, therefore, if this be possible, that some able, disinterested advocate for the slave trade, if such a one can be found, would step forth and do it. But if there be no such man, let the interested, and those who are in this traffic, and the slavery of the Africans arise and show it to be just and benevolent, if they can. We will promise you a candid and patient hearing, for we desire to justify you if it were possible. If this can be done to the satisfaction of all, it would remove from our minds a set of painful feelings, which cannot be easily described, and dissipate a gloom which now hangs heavy upon us, in the view of the exceeding depravity, unrighteousness, and cruelty of men who, for a little gain, will deluge millions in slavery and blood, with an unfeeling heart, and their eyes fast shut against the glaring light which condemns their horrid deeds, and in the painful prospect of the dreadful vengeance of Heaven for such daring outrage against our fellow-men, our brethren. But, until this be done, this business must be unavoidably viewed in the most disagreeable, odious, horrible light by us. And we must be suffered to consider, and lay before the public, some of the great aggravations which attend the continuation of this practice by us in these United States. When the inhabitants of these states found themselves necessarily involved in contentions with Britain in order to continue a free people, and had the distressing prospect of a civil war, they, being assembled in Congress, in October, 1774, did agree and resolve, in the following words: "We will neither import, nor purchase any slave imported, after the first day of December next; after which time we will wholly discontinue the slave trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our vessels, nor sell our commodities or manufactures, to those who are concerned in it." This reasonable, noble, and important resolution was approved by the people in general, and they adhered to it through the war, during which time there was much publicly said and done which was at least an implicit and practical declaration of the unreasonableness and injustice of the slave trade and of slavery in general. It was repeatedly declared in Congress,

as the language and sentiment of all these states, and by other public bodies of men, "that we hold these truths to be self-evident, that *all men* are created *equal*; that they are endowed with certain *unalienable rights*; that among these are *life, liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness." "That all men are born equally *free* and *independent*, and have certain natural, inherent, and unalienable rights, among which are, the defending and enjoying *life* and *liberty*, acquiring, possessing, and protecting *property*, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety. By the immutable laws of nature, all men are entitled to life and liberty," etc. The Africans, and the blacks in servitude among us, were really as much included in these assertions as ourselves, and their right, unalienable right to liberty, and to procure and possess property, is as much asserted as ours, if they be *men*; and if we have not allowed them to enjoy these unalienable rights, but violently deprived them of liberty and property, and still taking as far as in our power all liberty and property from the nations in Africa, we are guilty of a ridiculous, wicked contradiction and inconsistency, and practically authorize any nation or people, who have power to do it, to make us their slaves. The whole of our war with Britain was a contest for *liberty*, by which we, when brought to the severest test, practically adhered to the above assertions, so far as they concerned ourselves at least; and we declared in words and actions that we chose rather to *die* than to be slaves, or have our liberty and property taken from us. We viewed the British in an odious and contemptible light, purely because they were attempting to deprive us by violence in some measure of those our unalienable rights; but if at the *same time*, or since, we have taken or withheld these same rights from the Africans or any of our fellow-men, we have justified the inhabitants of Britain in all they have done against us, and declared that all the blood which has been shed in consequence of our opposition to them is chargeable on us. If we do not allow this, and abide by the above declarations, we charge ourselves with the guilt of all the blood which has been shed by means of the slave trade, and of an unprovoked and most injurious conduct in depriving innumerable Africans of their just, unalienable rights, in violently taking and withholding from them all liberty and property, holding them as our own property, and buying and selling them as we do our horses and cattle, reducing them to the most vile, humiliating, and painful situation. This whole contest, it must be again observed, was suited to bring and keep in our view, and impress on our minds, a deep and lasting sense of the worth of liberty, and the unrighteousness of taking it from any man, and, consequently,

of our unrighteousness and cruelty towards the Africans. If it were known that the wise Governor of the world had determined to take some method to convince us of the injustice of the slave trade and of the slavery of the Africans, and manifest his displeasure with us for it, and use means suited to reform us, could we conceive of any measures which might be better suited to answer this end than those which have actually taken place in this war, considered in all the circumstances of it? It would be thought impossible that every one who then was, or had been, active in reducing the Africans to the abject and suffering state in which they are in the West Indies, and even among us, should not reflect upon it with self-condemnation, regret, and horror, had not experiment proved the contrary. And while we execrated the British for taking our men and ordering them to be transported to the East Indies, and for crowding so many of our people into prisons and prison ships, — where they died by thousands, without any relief or pity from them, — was it possible for us not to reflect upon our treatment of the Africans, in transporting so many thousands of them from their native country to a land of slavery, while multitudes, being crowded and shackled in our ships, have died on their passage, without one to help or pity them? Could any avoid seeing the righteous hand of God stretched out against us, and retaliating our unrighteous, cruel treatment of them in a way suited to strike conviction into our minds of our guilt, and of the righteous displeasure of Heaven with us for these horrid deeds which had been done by us? Surely we had good reason to espouse the language of the brethren of Joseph, in a similar case: “We are verily guilty concerning our brethren the Africans, in that we saw the anguish of their souls under our cruel hands; and they besought us, and cried for pity, but we would not hear; *therefore is this distress come upon us.*” Is it possible that the Americans should, after all this, and in the face of this light and conviction, and after they had obtained liberty and independence for themselves, continue to hold hundreds of thousands of their fellow-men in the most abject slavery? — and not only so, but, notwithstanding their resolutions and declarations, renew and carry on the slave trade, and from year to year convey thousands of their fellow-men from their native country to a state of most severe and perpetual bondage? This would have been thought impossible, was it not known to be true in fact; and who can describe the aggravated guilt which the Americans have brought upon themselves by this? If this was a Heaven-daring crime of the first magnitude before the war with Britain, how much more criminal must we be *now*, when, instead

of regarding the admonitions of Heaven and the light and conviction set before us, and repenting and reforming, we persist in this cruel practice! What name shall be given to their daring presumption and hardness, who, from a thirst for gold, have renewed this trade in slaves, in the bodies and souls of men, and of those whom they employ in this inhuman, horrid business?

“Is there not some chosen curse,  
Some hidden thunder in the stores of heaven,  
Red with uncommon wrath, to blast these men,”—

who owe their riches to such aggravated, detestable crimes, now necessarily involved in carrying on this trade?

And is not Heaven frowning upon us *now*? We are as yet disappointed in our expectations of peace, prosperity, and happiness, in consequence of liberty and independence. Instead of rising to honor, dignity, and respect among the nations, we have suddenly sunk into disgrace and contempt. Our trade labors under great disadvantages, and is coming to nothing. We have lost our money, having parted with the greatest part of it, not to pay our debts, but for foreign luxuries or unnecessaries, and those things which might have been manufactured among ourselves. Our public and private debts are not paid, but are increasing. A spirit of discontent and murmuring, and jealousy of our rulers, and complaining of them, has spread among us, and in some places insurrections, and open, violent opposition to government, have taken place, which have proceeded to plunder and shedding blood. Divisions and contentions have taken place among ourselves, and seem to be hastening to universal confusion and anarchy. There is a general complaint of *evil times*; and where is the family or man to be found which does not sensibly share in the general calamity, and is not involved in some peculiar difficulty? The British are so far from being at peace with us, that they have done much to bring on the before-mentioned evils. They are attempting to ruin our trade as much as is in their power, and refuse to deliver up to us the western posts, which we claim, and put on a hostile appearance, which may soon issue in an open war. The Indians are making war upon us, and kill and captivate the inhabitants of the western settlements, and threaten to be yet a more dreadful scourge to us. The Algerines, without any provocation, are captivating our ships, and carry our men into slavery: and we have no power to redeem them, or to put a stop to their further depredations. The State of Rhode Island, in particular, — which, as has been shown, has had a distinguished hand in the slave trade, — is fallen into a disagreeable and very calamitous situation.

Great animosities and contentions with each other have arisen. They are divided into parties, and biting and devouring one another. Public injustice is established by law. They have lost their credit abroad, and are become the subject of ridicule, reproach, and contempt. Their trade and all business are discouraged, and almost ruined; and Newport, the metropolis, is fast going to poverty and inevitable ruin, unless some unforeseen event should take place to prevent it. Wherefore is all this come upon us so suddenly, and in such a remarkable and unexpected manner? Is not the hand of God very visibly stretched out against us? And must there not some Achan be found with us, which has provoked the Most High to bring all this evil upon us, after he had wrought for us and delivered us in such a remarkable manner, and which must be put away before we can reasonably expect to prosper? And is not the renewal of the slave trade, and our continuing to hold so many thousands of our fellow-men in slavery, one principal ground of the divine displeasure? Surely none can doubt of this who view it in the light in which it has been represented above. Other sins and follies have been the means of the evils which are come upon us, such as idleness, intemperance, luxury, and extravagance, in a variety of ways, a neglect to encourage and carry on manufactories, and discourage the importation of unnecessary foreign articles, and opposition to the imposts proposed by Congress, etc. But may not this folly and infatuation itself be justly considered as a judgment which has come upon us, as the just consequence of our persisting in this aggravated, capital, and horrid crime? If this trade and the slavery of the Africans can be vindicated, and proved to be consistent with ourselves, just, and laudable, we again declare we wish to see it done. But if this cannot be done,—and we must be allowed at present to be confident it cannot,—then there is no other hopeful way to escape yet greater evils but by repentance and reformation. Of what importance, then, is it that all ranks and orders of men among us should turn their attention to this matter, and repent, and do works meet for repentance, by reforming and exerting themselves in their several places, and, according to their advantages and abilities, entirely to suppress this evil practice! Is it not to be wished that the convention of these states, now sitting at Philadelphia, may take this matter into serious consideration, and at least keep it in view, while they are forming a system of government, that the supreme power of these states may be able effectually to interpose in this affair? If the above representation be in any way agreeable to the truth, in vain are the wisest counsels and the

utmost exertions to extricate ourselves from present evils, or avoid greater, unless the *slave trade*, and all the attendants of it, be condemned and suppressed. If we persist in thus transgressing the laws of Heaven, and obstinately refuse to do unto these our brethren as we would all men should do unto us, we cannot prosper. It has been, with justice, publicly lamented that Congress has not power to redeem those of our brethren who have fallen into the hands of the Algerines, and are reduced to slavery by them, and as an intolerable evil to have them neglected and left in wretched circumstances for so long a time. But why do we “strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel”? Why should we be so stupid and partial as to turn all our attention to these *few sufferers*, and wholly overlook the sufferings of so many thousands among us, and of the thousands who are brought from their dear native country and all their relations, and fixed in perpetual slavery, by a set of pirates and banditti from among ourselves, as hardened against the groans and sufferings of their fellow-men, as unjust and cruel, as the most abandoned among the Algerines? In the name of reason and true benevolence, it is asked why the latter, which is before our eyes, and an evil incomparably greater than the former, is wholly overlooked as not worthy of any regard, and the former fixed upon as a most affecting, intolerable instance of suffering, — which, at the same time, may be considered as a small degree of retaliation for our enslaving the Africans, and is suited to remind us of it, and to open our eyes to see, and make us feel our unrighteousness and cruelty towards them, and our gross inconsistency and self-contradiction in condemning these Algerines, the inhabitants of Africa, — and at the same time not condemning ourselves, who are infinitely more criminal, but by our conduct are really justifying them? Had we any supreme legislature in these states, could they not easily restrain all the subjects from being concerned in the slave trade? And would they not bring the guilt of it on themselves should they not do it? And why have not the several legislatures in these United States done it? Why do they tolerate and connive at it while it is carried on, at least in some states, in their sight? Is it because it is thought to be the most profitable trade of any now carried on, and they are unwilling to prevent the introduction of the money which is brought into some of these states by this means? Some have suspected this to be the truth; but we will not admit it. Is it, then, because they do not attend sufficiently to the matter, and are not sensible of the unrighteousness and cruelty of the trade? or is it because they judge it not in their power, and that



they have no right and authority to interpose in this affair? This has been asserted by some, whether with reason or not it may be worth while seriously to consider. The Quakers, who have done more than any others to acquit themselves of the guilt of the slave trade, and have discovered more humanity and regard to the laws of Christ, in this instance, than any other denomination of Christians, (to the praise of the former and the shame of the latter it must be spoken,) they have, among their many other exertions in opposition to this trade, lately applied to the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island, praying them to devise some way to put a stop to the slave trade which is carried on by a number of persons in that state, which petition is now under consideration; and it is said they determine to petition all the legislatures in these United States to do the same. It is hoped they will not refuse to do any thing they have a right and power to do utterly to abolish this iniquity in these states, but they should fasten the guilt of it more than ever on themselves and on their constituents. It is said by some that this trade does not properly come under the cognizance of any legislature in these states, as they cannot make laws to bind their subjects when out of the limits of their jurisdiction, or punish them for what they do in Africa or the West Indies, especially as the slave trade is there tolerated and protected by law, custom, and general consent. This, perhaps, is the only objection that has been, or can be, offered against the legislatures of these states interposing to suppress this trade. It therefore deserves a particular examination.

It is granted by all, that common pirates may be punished by the laws of any state, when apprehended, wherever or in whatever part of the world their crimes were committed. There is good reason for this, it will be said, because these men are guilty of intolerable crimes, which are reprobated by all nations, and have really turned enemies to mankind, and, therefore, ought to be punished wherever they can be apprehended. To this it may be replied, that the slave trader who buys and sells his fellow-men, by which traffic he is the means of the death of many, and of reducing others to the most miserable bondage during life, is as really an enemy to mankind as the pirate, and violates common law, which is, or ought to be, the law of all nations, and is guilty of crimes of greater magnitude, exercises more inhumanity and cruelty, sheds more blood, and plunders more, and commits greater outrages against his fellow-men than most of those who are called pirates. In short, if any men deserve the name of pirates, these ought to be considered in the first and highest class of them; and if there be

no law against this commerce of the human species in Africa, or in Britain and in the West India islands, and this trade is tolerated in all these places, and elsewhere, does this make the practice less evil in itself, or more tolerable? Is this any reason why it should be tolerated by the legislatures in America? If it was the custom of those who carry on the slave trade to put to death one half of the men who sail in their ships when they arrive at the coast of Africa, and sell the other half of them, and this were tolerated there, and these traders found means to entice great numbers of our men to sail with them to Africa every year, by which thousands of our people were murdered or enslaved, would it be thought our legislatures had no right to restrain them, and at least banish every sea captain who was guilty of this, because the crime is not committed where they have jurisdiction, and where such cruelty and murder are tolerated, and not considered as crimes? For, in such an instance, the crime would not consist in shipping men on board their vessels, but in their treatment of them after they arrived at Africa. Could there be found a man, not interested in such a business, who would make this objection, or a legislature who would think it of the least weight? Surely no. But it would be of as much weight in the case proposed as in that under consideration. The Algerines have taken a number of Americans, and sold them into slavery. Have we not a right, ought we not, had we power, to oblige them to deliver them up, and set them at liberty, and lay such restraints upon them as to put it beyond their power to perpetuate such crimes in future? Would the plea of their being out of the limits of our jurisdiction be a good reason to suffer them to go on in their injuries without restraint? These American states ought to vindicate the rights of mankind, and promote their liberty and happiness, to the utmost of their power. Every state ought to pity the ignorance, weakness, and wickedness of the Africans, and afford them all the relief, protection, and assistance in their power, and do their utmost to restrain those of their subjects from hurting them who otherwise would take advantage of their distance from us, and of their ignorance and weakness. How, then, can they sit still, and suffer their subjects to carry on this horrible commerce, big with so much cruelty and murder, and be guiltless? On the whole, will it not appear to every impartial, benevolent man, who well attends to the matter, that if our legislatures refuse to interpose in this case, and will not at least outlaw those who are concerned in this trade and persist in it, it must be owing either to their not attending to and realizing the mag-

nitude of the crime and the evil involved in this commerce, or to some less excusable cause, if such there may be?

But if the legislature should neglect to do any thing which it is thought they might and ought to do, will this excuse the people at large? Might they not, if they were alarmed and engaged as they ought to be, if the above representation be in any measure just, do that which would effectually suppress among us this hideous, threatening evil? When our contention with Britain was coming on, the man who openly appeared active on their side was abandoned as unworthy the rights and privileges of society, and in many instances his neighbors withdrew all connection and commerce with him; and this was justified as a proper and important measure. And are not these men, who are carrying on this trade and enslaving and destroying their fellow-men, without any provocation from them, and hereby bringing guilt on these states and the awful judgment of Heaven,—are they not unworthy the privileges of freemen? Ought they not to be considered as enemies to mankind, and murderers of their brethren for the sake of gold, and real pests and plagues to society? And would not treating them as such effectually reform them, or banish them from among us? It has been observed, that when the war with Britain was coming on, we resolved not only that we would wholly discontinue the slave trade ourselves, *but that we would not “hire our vessels, nor sell our commodities or manufactures, to those who are concerned in it.”* If this resolution was reasonable and important then, it is as much, and more so, *now*; and this, fully put into practice, would put an effectual stop to it.

Shall we not, then, by this neglect, bring the guilt of this trade and the blood of the Africans on our own heads and on our children? And how dreadful will be the consequence, who can tell? The warning is given, and that is all that can be done by

CRITO.

October 13th, 1787.